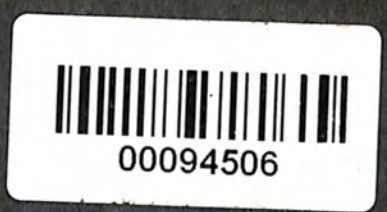
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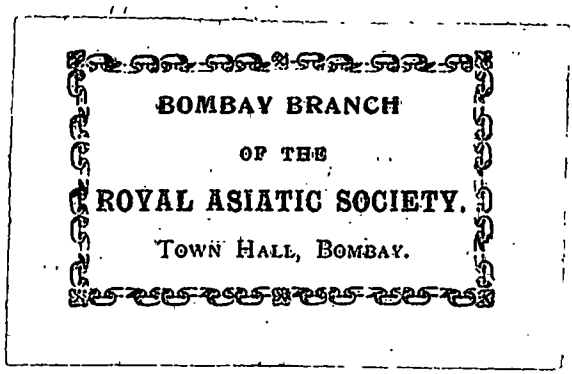

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AMENITIES

OF

LITERATURE,

CONSISTING OF

SKETCHES AND CHARACTERS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BY I. D'ISRAELI,

D.C.L. F.S.A.

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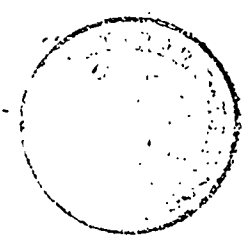
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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AMENITIES

OF

LITERATURE.

FIRST SOURCES OF MODERN HISTORY.

Society must have considerably advanced ere it could have produced an historical record; and who could have furnished even the semblance but the most instructed class, in the enjoyment of uninterrupted leisure, among every people? History therefore remained long a consecrated thing in the hands of the priesthood, from the polytheistical era of the Roman Pontiffs who registered their annals, to the days that the history of Christian Europe became chronicled by the monastic orders*.

* Archbishop Plagmund superintended the Saxon Annals to the year 891. The first Chronicles, those of Kent or Wessex, were regularly continued by the Archbishops of Canterbury, or by their directions, as far as 1000, or even 1070.—The Rev. Dr. Ingram's preface to the Saxon Chronicle.

These were our earliest Chronicles; the Britons possibly never wrote any.

Had it not been for the monks, exclaimed our learned Marsham, we should not have had a history of England.

The monks provided those chronicles which have served both for the ecclesiastical and civil histories of every European people. In every abbey the most able of its inmates, or the abbot himself, was appointed to record every considerable transaction in the kingdom, and sometimes extended their view to foreign parts. All these were set down in a volume reserved for this purpose; and on the decease of every sovereign these memorials were laid before the general chapter, to draw out a sort of chronological history, occasionally with a random comment, as the humour of the scribe prompted, or the opinions of the whole monastery sanctioned.

Besides these meagre annals the monasteries had other books more curious than their record of public affairs. These were their Leiger-books, of which some have escaped among the few reliques of the universal dissolution of the monasteries. In these registers or diaries they entered all matters relating to their own monastery and its dependencies. As time never pressed on the monkish secretary, his notabilia runs on very miscellaneously. Here were descents of families, and tenures of estates; authorities of charters and of cartularies; curious customs of counties, cities, and great

towns. Strange accidents were not uncommon then; and sometimes, between a miracle or a natural phenomenon, a fugitive anecdote stole in. The affairs of a monastery exhibited a moving picture of domestic life. These religious houses whose gate opened to the wayfarer, and who were the distributors of useful commodities to the neighbouring poor,—for in their larger establishments they included workmen of every class,—did not however maintain their munificence untainted by mundane passions. Forged charters had often sealed their possessions, and supposititious grants of mortuary donations silently transferred the wealth of families. These lords of the soil, though easy landlords, still cast an "evil eye" on the lands of their neighbour. Even rival monasteries have fought in meadows for the ownership; the stratagems of war and the battle-array of two troops of cudgelling monks might have furnished some cantos to an epic, less comic perhaps than that of "The Rape of the Bucket."

In the literary simplicity of the twelfth to the fourteenth century, while every great monastery had its historian, every chronicle derived its title from its locality; thus, among others, were the Glastonbury, the Peterborough, and the Abingdon Chronicles: and when Leland, so late as the reign of Henry the Eighth, in his search into monastic libraries, discovered one at St.

Neot's, he was at a loss to describe it otherwise than as "The Chronicle of St. Neot's." The famous Doomsday Book was originally known as "Liber de Winton," or "The Winchester Book," from its first place of custody. The same circumstance occurred among our neighbours, where *Les grandes Chroniques de Saint Denys* were so called from having been collected or compiled by the monks of that abbey. An abstract notion of history, or any critical discrimination of one chronicle from another, was not as yet familiar even to our scholars; and in the dearth of literature the classical models of antiquity were yet imperfectly contemplated.

It is not less curious to observe that, at a time when the literary celebrity of the monachal scribe could hardly pass the boundaries of the monastery, and the monk himself was restricted from travelling, bound by indissoluble chains, yet this lone man, as if eager to enjoy a literary reputation however spurious, was not scrupulous in practising certain dishonest devices. Before the discovery of printing, the concealment of a manuscript for the purpose of appropriation was an artifice which, if we may decide by some rumours, more frequently occurred than has been detected. Plagiarism is the common sin of the monkish chronicler, to which he was often driven by repeating a mouldy tale a hundred times told;

but his furtive pen extended to the capital crime of felony. I shall venture to give a pair of literary anecdotes of monkish writers.

Matthew of Paris, one of these chroniclers, is somewhat esteemed, and Matthew of Westminster is censured, for having copied in his "Flores Historiarum" the other Matthew; but we need not draw any invidious comparison between the two Matthews, since Matthew the first had himself transcribed the work of Roger the Prior of Wendover. The famous "Polychronicon," which long served as a text-book for the encyclopedic knowledge of the fourteenth century, has two names attached to it, and one, however false, which can never be separated from the work, interwoven in its texture. This famed volume is ascribed to Ranulph or Ralph Higden of St. Werberg's Monastery, now the Cathedral of Chester. Ralph, that he might secure the tenure of this awful edifice of universal history for a thousand years, most subdolously contrived that the initial letter of every chapter, when put together, signified that Ralph, a monk of Chester, had compiled the work. Centuries did not contradict the assumption; but time, that blabber of more fatal secrets than those of authors, discovered in the same monastery that another brother Roger had laboured for the world

their universal history in his "Polycratica Temporum." On examination, the truth flashed! For lo! the peccant pen of Ralph had silently transmigrated the "Polycratica" into the "Polychronicon," and had only laid a trap for posterity by his treacherous acrostics*!

These universal chroniclers usually opened, *ab initio*, with the Creation, dispersed at Babel reach home, and paused at the Norman Conquest. This was their usual first division; it was a long journey, but a beaten path. Whatever they found written was history to them, for they were without means of correcting their aptitude for credence. Their anachronisms often ludicrously give the lie to their legendary statements.

Most of these monastic writers composed in a debased Latinity of their own, bald and barbarous, but which had grown up with the age; their diction bears a rude sort of simplicity. Yet though they were not

* We have a remarkable instance among the Italian historians of this period. Giovanni Villani wrote about 1330; Muratori discovered that Villani had wholly transcribed the ancient portion of his history from an old Chronicle of Malespini, who wrote about 1230, without any acknowledgment whatever. Doubtless Villani imagined that an insulated manuscript, during a century's oblivion, had little chance of ever being classed among the most ancient records of Italian history. Malespini's Chronicle, like its brothers, was stuffed with fables; Villani was honest enough not to add to them, though not sufficiently so not silently to appropriate the whole chronicle—the only one Dante read.—*Tiraboschi*, v. 410, part 2nd.

artists, there were occasions when they were inevitably graphic—when they detail like a witness in court. These writers have been lauded by the gratitude of antiquaries, and valued by philosophical historians. A living historian has observed of them, that "nothing can be more contemptible as compositions; nothing can be more satisfactory as authorities." But it is necessary that we should be reminded of the partial knowledge and the partial passions of these sources of our earlier modern history. Lift the cowl from the historiographers in their cells recording those busy events in which they never were busied, characterising those eminent persons from whom they were far removed; William of Malmesbury, not one of the least estimable of these writers, confesses that he drew his knowledge from public rumours or what the relators of news brought to them*. In some respects, their history sinks to the level of one of our newspapers, and is as liable to be tinged with party feelings. The whole monastery had as limited notions of public affairs as they had of the kingdom itself, of which they knew but little out of their own county.

No monastic writer, as an historian, has descended to posterity for the eminence of his genius, for the

* We have an elegant modern version of this monk's history by the Rev. J. Sharpe.

same stamp of mind gave currency to their works. Woe to the sovereign who would have clipt their wings! then "tongues talked and pens wrote" monkish. There was a proverb among them, that "The giver is blessed, but he who taketh away is accursed." None but themselves could appeal to Heaven, and for their crowned slaves they were not penurious of their beatitude. They knew to crouch as well as to thunder. They usually clung to the reigning party; and a new party or a change of dynasty was sure to change their chronicling pen. HALL, the chronicler of Henry the Eighth, at the first moment when it was allowable to speak distinctly concerning these monkish writers, observed, "These monastical persons, learned and unliterate, better fed than taught, took on them to write and register in the book of fame the arts, and doings, and politic governance of kings and princes." It seems not to have occurred to the chronicler of Henry the Eighth that, had not those monks "taken on them to write and register," we should have had no "Book of Fame." It is a duty we owe to truth to penetrate into the mysteries of monkery, but the monks will always retain their right to receive their large claims on our admiration of their labours.

There was also another class of early chroniclers throughout Europe; men who filled the office of a sort

of royal historiographer, who accompanied the king and the army in their progress, to note down the occurrences they deemed most honourable or important to the nation. But incidents written down by a monk in his cell, or by a diarist pacing the round with majesty, would be equally warped, by the views of the monastery in the one case, or by a flattering subservience to the higher power in the other.

In this manner the early history of Europe was written; the more ancient part was stuffed with fables; and when it might have become useful in recording passages and persons of the writer's own times, we have a one-sided tale, wherein while half is suppressed, the other is disguised by flattery or by satire. Such causes are well known to have corrupted these first origins of modern history, a history in which the commons and the people at large had very little concern, till the day arrived, in the progress of society, when chronicles were written by laymen in the vernacular idiom for their nation.

ARNOLDE'S CHRONICLE.

VERY early in the sixteenth century appeared a volume which seems to have perplexed our literary historians by its mutable and undefinable character. It is a book without a title, and miscalled by the deceptive one of "Arnolde's Chronicle, or the Customs of London;" but "the Customs" are not the manners of the people, but rather "the Customs" of the Custom-House, and it in no shape resembles, or pretends to be "a chronicle." This erroneous title seems to have been injudiciously annexed to it by Hearne the antiquary, and should never have been retained. This anomalous work, of which there are three ancient editions, had the odd fate of all three being sent forth without a title and without a date; and our bibliographers cannot with any certainty ascertain the order or precedence of these editions. One edition was issued from the press of a Flemish printer at Antwerp, and possibly may be the earliest. The first printer, whether English or Flemish, was evidently at a loss to christen this monstrous miscellaneous babe, and ridiculously took up the title and subjects of the first articles which offered themselves, to designate more than a hundred of the most discrepant

variety. The ancient editions appeared as "The names of the Baylyfs, Custos, Mayres, and Sherefs of the Cyte of London, with the Chartour and Lybartyes of the same Cyte, &c. &c., with other dyvers matters good and necessary for every Cytezen to understand and know;"—a humble title equally fallacious with the higher one of a "Chronicle," for it has described many objects of considerable curiosity, more interesting than "mayors and sheriffs," and even "the charter and liberties" of "the cyte."

In conveying a notion of a jumble *, though the things themselves are sufficiently grave, we cannot avoid a ludicrous association; yet this should not lessen the value of its information.

A considerable portion of this medley wholly relates to the municipal interests of the citizens of London—charters and grants, with a vast variety of forms or models of public and private instruments, chiefly of a commercial description. Parish ordinances mix with Acts of Parliament; and when we have conned the oath of the Beadle of the Ward, we are startled by Pope Nicholas' Bull. We have the craft of grafting trees and altering of fruits, as well in colour as in taste, close to an oration of the messenger of "the Soudan

* In Oldys' "British Librarian" there is an accurate analysis of the work, in which every single article is enumerated.

of Babylon" to the Pope in 1488. Indeed, we have many more useful crafts, besides the altering of the flavour of fruits, and the oration of the Mahometan to the representative of St. Peter; for here are culinary receipts, to keep sturgeon, to make vinegar "shortly," "percely to grow in an hour's space," and to make ypocras, straining the wine through a bag of spices—it was nothing more than our mulled wine; and further, are receipts to make ink, and compound gunpowder, to make soap, and to brew beer. Whether we may derive any fresh hints from our ancestor of the year 1500, exceeds my judgment; but to this eager transcriber posterity owes one of the most passionate poems in our language; for betwixt "the composition between the merchants of England and the town of Antwerp," and "the reckoning to buy wares in Flanders," first broke into light "A Ballade of the Notbrowne Mayde." Thus, when an indiscriminating collector is at work, one cannot foresee what good fortune may not chance to be his lot.

Warton has truly characterised this work as "the most heterogeneous and multifarious miscellany that ever existed;" but he seems to me to have mistaken both the design of the collector, and the nature of the collection. Some supposed that the collector, Richard Arnold, intended the volume to be an antiquarian

repertory; but as the materials were recent, that idea cannot be admitted; and Warton censures the compiler, who, to make up a volume, printed together whatever he could amass of notices and papers of every sort and subject. The modern editor of "Arnolde's Chronicle" was perplexed at the contents of what he calls "a strange book."

The critical decision of Warton is much too searching for a volume in which the compiler never wrote a single line, and probably never entertained the remotest idea of the printer's press. This book without a name is, in fact, nothing more than a simple collection made by an English merchant engaged in the Flemish trade. Nor was such a work peculiar to this artless collector; for in a time of rare publications, such men seemed to have formed for themselves a sort of library, of matters they deemed worthy of recollection, to which they could have easy recourse *. By the internal evidence, Arnold was no stranger at Antwerp, nor at Dordrecht. Antwerp was then a favourite residence of the English merchants; there the typographic art flourished, and the printers often printed English books; and as this collection was printed at Antwerp by Doesborowe, a Flemish printer, we might incline with Douce, to infer

* A similar volume to Arnolde's may be found in the Harl. MSS., No. 2252.

that the Flemish was the first edition; for it seems not probable that a foreign printer would have selected an English volume of little interest to foreigners, to reprint; although we can imagine that from personal consideration, or by the accident of obtaining the manuscript, he might have been induced to be the first publisher. Whoever was the first printer, the collector himself seems to have been little concerned in the publication, by the suppression of his name, by the omission of a title, by not prefixing a preface, nor arranging in any way this curious medley of useful things, which he would familiarly turn to as his occasions needed, and —if we may compare a grave volume with the lightest—was of that class which ladies call their "scrap-books," and assuredly not, according to its fallacious title, a CHRONICLE.

THE FIRST PRINTED CHRONICLE.

THE first chronicle in our vernacular prose, designed for the English people, was the earnest labour of one of themselves, a citizen and alderman, and sometime sheriff of London, ROBERT FABYAN. Here, for the first time, the spectacle of English affairs, accompanied by what he has called "A Concordance of Stories," which included separate notices of French history contemporaneous with the periods he records, was opened for "the unlettered who understand no Laten." Our chronicler, in the accustomed mode, fixes the periods of history, by dates from Adam or from Brute. He opens with a superfluous abridgment of Geoffrey of Monmouth—the "Polychronicon" is one of his favourite sources, but his authorities are multifarious. His French history is a small stream from "La Mer des Chroniques," and other chronicles of his contemporary Gaguin, a royal historiographer who wandered in the same taste, but who, Fabyan had the sagacity to discover, carefully darkened all matters unpleasant to Frenchmen, but never "leaving anything out of his book that may sound to the advancement of the French nacyon."

It was a rare occurrence in a layman, and moreover a merchant, to have cultivated the French and the Latin languages. Fabyan was not a learned man, for the age of men of learning had not yet arrived, though it was soon to come. At that early day of our typography, when our native annalists lay scattered in their manuscript seclusion, it was no ordinary delving which struck into the dispersed veins of the dim and dark mine of our history. So little in that day was the critical knowledge of our writers, that Fabyan has "quoted the same work under different appellations," and some of our historical writers he seems not to have met with in his researches, for the chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and of Peter Langtoft, though but verse, would have contributed some freshness to his own. In seven unequal divisions, the chronicle closes with the days of the seventh Henry. These seven divisions were probably more fantastical than critical; the number was adopted to cheer the good man with "the seven joys of the Virgin," which he sings forth in unmetrical metre, evidently participating in the rapturous termination of each of his own "seven joys."

Our grave chronicler, arrayed in his civic dignities, seems to have provoked the sensitiveness of the poetical critic in Warton, and the caustic wit in Horace

Walpole. "No Sheriff," exclaims Walpole, "was ever less qualified to write a history of England. He mentions the deaths of princes and revolutions of government with the same phlegm and brevity as he would speak of the appointment of church-wardens."

We may suspect that our citizen and chronicler, however he might be familiar with the public acts of royalty, had no precise notions of the principles of their government. We cannot otherwise deem of an historical recorder, whose political sagacity, in that famous interview between our Edward the Fourth and Louis the Eleventh, of which Comines has left us a lively scene, could not penetrate further than to the fashion of the French monarch's dress. He tells us, of "the nice and wanton disguised apparel that the King Louys wore upon him at the time of this meeting, *I might make a long rehearsal,* apparelled more like a minstrel than a prince." Fabyan shared too in the hearty "John Bullism" of that day in a mortal jealousy of the Gaul, and even of his *Sainte Ampoule.* Though no man had a greater capacity of faith for miracles and saints on English ground, yet for those of his neighbours he had found authority that it was not necessary for his salvation to believe them, and has ventured to decide on one, that "they must be folys (fools) who believe it." Had the *Sainte*

Ampoule, however, been deposited in Westminster Abbey for our own coronations, instead of the Cathedral at Rheims for a French king, Fabyan had not doubted of the efficacy of every drop of the holy oil.

But the dotage of FABYAN did not particularly attach to him; and though his intellectual comprehension was restricted to the experience of an alderman, he might have been the little Machiavel of his wardmote—for he has thrown out a shrewd observation which no doubt we owe to his own sagacity. In noticing the neglect of a mayor in repairing the walls which had been begun by his predecessor, he observes that this generally happens, for "one mayor will not finish that thing which another beginneth, for then they think, be the deed ever so good and profitable, that the honour thereof shall be ascribed to the beginner, and not to the finisher, which lack of charity and desire of vain glory causeth many good acts and deeds to die, and grow out of mind, to the great decay of the commonwealth of the city." A profound observation, which might be extended to monarchs as well as mayors.

Indulging too often the civic curiosity of "a citizen and alderman," FABYAN has been taunted for troubling posterity. "FABYAN," says Warton, "is equally attentive to the succession of the mayors of London and the monarchs of England. He seems to have thought the

dinners at Guildhall and the pageantries of the city companies, more interesting transactions than our victories in France and our struggles for public liberty at home."

This seems to be a random stricture. The alderman, indeed, has carefully registered the mayors and the sheriffs of London; and the scientific in "high and low prices" perhaps may be grateful, that our pristine chronicler has also furnished the prices of wheat, oxen, sheep and poultry—but we cannot find that he has commemorated the diversified forms these took on the solemn tables of the Guildhall, nor can we meet with the pasteboard pomps of city pageants, one only being recorded, on the return of Henry the Sixth from France.

Our modern critic, composing in the spirit of our day, alludes to "the struggle for public liberty;" but "public liberty" must have been a very ambiguous point with the honest citizen who had been a sad witness to the contests of two murderous families, who had long sought their mutual destruction, and long convulsed the whole land. We may account for the tempered indifference, and "the brief recitals" for which this simple citizen is reproached, who had lived through such changeful and ensanguined scenes, which had left their bleeding memories among the families of his contemporaries.

The faculties of Fabyan were more level with their

objects when he had to chronicle the "tempestuous weathering of thunder and lightning," with the ominous fall of a steeple, or "the image of our Lady" dashed down from its rood; or when he describes the two castles in the air, whence issued two armies, black and white, combating in the skies till the white vanished! Such portents lasted much later than the days of Fabyan, for honest Stowe records what had once ushered in St. James's night, when the lightning and thunder coming in at the south window and bursting on the north, the bells of St. Michael were listened to with horror, ringing of themselves, while ugly shapes were dancing on the steeple. Their natural philosophy and their piety were long stationary, yet even then some were critical in their remarks; for when Fabyan recorded "flying dragons and fiery spirits in the air," this was corrected by omitting "the fiery spirits," but agreeing to "the flying dragons." FABYAN however has preserved more picturesque and ingenious visions in some legends of saints or apparitions—still delightsome. These legends formed their "Works of Fiction," and were more affecting than ours, for they were supernatural, and no one doubted their verity.

Our pristine chronicler, as we have seen, has received hard measure from the two eminent critics of the eighteenth century, who have censured as a history that

which is none. Chronicles were written when the science of true history had yet no existence; a chronicle then in reality is but a part of history. Every fact dispersed in its insulated state refuses all combination; cause and effect lie remote and obscured from each other; disguised by their ostensible pretexts, the true motives of actions in the great actors of the drama of history cannot be found in the chronological chronicler. The real value of his diligence consists in copiousness and discrimination; qualities rather adverse to each other. FABYAN betrays the infirmities of the early chronicler, not yet practised even in the art of simple detail, without distinction of the importance or the insignificance of the matters he records: his eager pen reckoned the number without knowing to test the weight; to him all facts appeared of equal worth, for all alike had cost him the same toil; and thus he yields an abundance without copiousness. In raising the curiosity which he has not satisfied for us, his mighty tome shrinks into a narrow scope, and his imperfect narratives, brief and dry, offer only the skeletons of history. The mere antiquarian indeed prefers the chronicle to the history; the acquisition of a fact with him is the limit of his knowledge, and he is apt to dream that he possesses the superstructure when he is only at work on the foundations.

The Chronicle of FABYAN attracts our notice for a remarkable incident attending its publication. The Chronicle was finished in 1504, and remained in manuscript during the author's life, who died in 1512. The first edition did not appear till 1516. The cause which delayed the printing of an important work, for such it was in that day, has not been disclosed; yet perhaps we might have been interested to have learned whether this protracted publication arose out of neglect difficult to comprehend, or from the printer, reluctant to risk the cost, or from any impediment from a higher quarter.

Be this as it may, we possess the writer's genuine work, for the printer, Pynson, was faithful to his author. The rarity of this first edition Bale, on a loose rumour which no other literary historian has sanctioned, ascribes to its suppression by Cardinal Wolsey, who is represented in his fury to have condemned the volume to a public ignition, which no one appears to have witnessed, for its "dangerous exposition of the revenues of the clergy," which is not found in the volume. FABYAN truly was *ter Catholicus;* he was of the old religion, dying in the odour of sanctity, and was spared the trial of the new. The alderman's voluminous will is now for us at least as curious as anything in his chronicle*. We here behold the play of the whole

* We are indebted to the zealous research of Sir Henry Ellis for

machinery of superstition, when men imagined that they secured the repose of their souls by feeing priests and bribing saints by countless masses. This funereal rite was then called "the month's mind," and which, at least for that short period, prolonged the memory of the departed. For this lugubrious performance were provided ponderous torches for the bearers, tapers for shrines, and huge candlesticks to be kept lighted at the altar. Three trenthalls—that is thirty masses thrice told—were to be chorussed by the Grey Friars; six priests were to perform the high mass, chant the requiem, and recite the *De Profundis* and the *Dirige;* and for nine years, on his mortuary day, he charges his "tenement in Cornhill" to pay for an *Obite!* But not only friars and priests were to pray or to sing for the repose of the soul of Alderman Fabyan, all comers were invited to kneel around the tomb; and at times children were to be called in, who if they could not read a *De Profundis* from their Psalter, the innocents were to cry forth a *Pater-Noster* or an *Ave!* There was a purveyance of ribs of beef and mutton and ale, "stock-fish, if Lent," and other recommendations for "the comers to the *Dirige* at night." The Alderman however seems to have planned a kind of economy in

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the disinterment of this document as well as for the collations which appear in his edition.

his "month's mind," for not only was the repose of his soul in question, but also "the souls of all above written"—and these were a bead-roll of all the branches of Fabyan's family.

The Chronicle of FABYAN was not long given to the world, when it encountered the doom of a system at its termination, just before the beginnings of a coming one; that fatal period of a change in human affairs and human opinions, usually described as a state of transition. But in this particular instance, the change occurred preceded by no transitional approach; for within the small circuit of thirty years it seemed as if the events of whole centuries had been more miraculously compressed, than any in those "lives of the saints" whose legendary lore, provided the saints were English, Master FABYAN had loved to perpend. It was Henry the Eighth who turned all the sense of our chronicler into nonsense, all his honest faith into lying absurdities, all his exhortations to maintain "religious houses" into treasonable matters.

Successive editors of the editions of 1533, 43, and 55, surpassed each other in watchfulness, to rid themselves of the old song. Never was author so mutilated in parts, nor so wholly changed from himself; and when, as it sometimes happened, neither purgation nor castration availed the reforming critics, the author's

sides bore their marginal flagellations. The corrections or alterations were however dexterously performed, for the texture of the work betrayed no trace of the rents. The omission of a phrase saved a whole sentence, and the change of an adjective or two set right a whole character. It is true they swept away all his delightful legends, without sparing his woeful metres of "the seven joys of the blessed Virgin," and his appreciation of some favourite relics. They disbanded all the saints; or treated them as they did "the holy virgin Edith," of whom Fabyan has recorded that "many *virtues* be rehearsed," which they delicately reduced to *verses*. His Holiness the Pope is simply "the Bishop of Rome;" and on one memorable occasion—the Papal interdiction of John—this "Bishop" is designated in the margin by the reformer as "that monstrous and wicked Beast." The narrative of Becket cost our compurgators, as it has many others, much shifting, and more omissions. In the tale of the hardy and ambitious Archbishop murdered by knightly assassins, Fabyan said, "They *martyred* the blessed Archbishop;" our corrector of the press simply reads, "They slew the traitorous Bishop." The *omissions* and the commissions in the Chronicle of FABYAN are often amusing and always instructive; but these could not have been detected but by a severe collation, which has been happily performed.

When the antiquary Brand discovered that FABYAN had been "*modernized*" in later editions, his observation would seem to have extended no further than to the style; but the style of FABYAN is simple and clear even to modern readers: modernized truly it was, not however for phrases, but for notions—not for statements, but for omissions—not for words, but for things.

HENRY THE EIGHTH; HIS LITERARY CHARACTER.

PEACE and policy had diffused a halcyon calmness over the land, and the people now discerned the approach of another era. Henry the Eighth, who appears with such opposite countenances in the great gallery of history, gave the country more glorious promises of an accomplished sovereign than England had yet witnessed; and however he may appear differently before the calm eye of posterity, the passions of his own times secured his popularity even to his latter days. Youthful, with all its vigorous and generous temper, and not inferior in the majesty of his intellect any more than in that of his person,—learned in his closet, yet enterprising in action,—this sovereign impressed his own commanding character on the nation. Such a monarch gave wings to their genius. Long pent up in their unhappy island, they soon indulged in a visionary dominion in France, and in rapid victories in Scotland; insular England once more aspired to be admitted into the great European family of states; and Henry was the arbiter of Francis of France, and of Charles of Germany. The awakened spirit of the English people unconsciously was preparatory to the day which yet no one dreamed

of. The minds of men were opening to wider views; and he who sate on the throne was one who would not be the last man in the kingdom to be mindless of its progress.

This lettered monarch himself professed authorship, and a sceptre was his pen. When he sent forth a volume which all Europe was to read, and was graced by a new title which all Europe was to own, who dared to controvert the crowned controversialist, or impugn the validity of that airy title? His majesty alone was allowed to confute himself *. Trained from his early days in scholastic divinity, for he was designed to be an archbishop, the volume, however aided by others, was the native growth of his own mind. The king's taste for this learning was studiously flattered by the great cardinal, who gently recommended to his restless master a perusal of the nineteen folios of Thomas Aquinas, possibly with the hope of fixing the royal fly in the repose of the cobwebs of the schoolmen. Such indeed were his habits of study, that he could interest himself in compiling a national Latin grammar, when the schools succeeded to the dissolved monasteries. The

* The manuscript of Henry the Eighth reposes in the Vatican, witnessed by his own hand in this inscription:—"Anglorum Rex, Henricus Leoni X. 'mittit hoc opus et fidei testem et amicitiæ.'"—I found this inscription in one of the notes of Selden to the Poly-olbion of Drayton.

grammar was issued as an act of parliament; no other but the royal grammar was to be thumbed without incurring the peril of a premunire*.

It is to be regretted that we are supplied with but few literary anecdotes of this literary monarch. Some we may incidentally glean, and some may be deduced from inference. The age was not yet far enough advanced in civilisation to enjoy that inquisitive leisure which leaves its memorials for a distant posterity in the court tattle of a Suetonius, or the secret history of a Procopius. It has, however, been recorded that certain acts of parliament and proclamations were corrected by the royal pen, and particularly the first draught of the act which empowered the king to erect bishoprics was written by his own hand; and he was the active editor of those monarchical pamphlets, as they may be classed, on religious topics, which were frequently required during his reign.

This learned monarch was unquestionably the first patron of our vernacular literature; he indulged in a literary intercourse with our earliest writers, and evinced a keen curiosity on any novelty in the infant productions of the English press. On frequent occa-

* The famous Grammar of Lilly was the work of a learned association, in which it appears that both the king and the cardinal had the honour to co-operate. Sir Thomas Elyot has designated Henry "as the chief author."—Preface to "The Castel of Health."

sions he took a personal interest in the success, and even in the concoction, of literary productions. He fully entered into the noble designs of Sir Thomas Elyot to create a vernacular style, and critically discussed with him the propriety of the use of new words, "apt for the purpose." And on one occasion, when Sir Thomas Elyot projected our first Latin dictionary, the king, in the presence of the courtiers, commended the design and offered the author not only his royal counsel, but a supply of such books as the royal library possessed.

The king was not offended, as were some of the courtiers, with the freedom displayed by Elyot in some of his ethical works. Elyot tells us, "His grace not only took it in the better part, but with princely words, full of majesty, commended my diligence, simplicity, and courage, in that I spared no estate in the rebuking of vice." The king, at the same time that he protected Elyot from his petty critics, rewarded the early efforts of another vernacular author, who had dedicated to him his first work in English prose, by a pension, which enabled the young student, Roger Ascham, to set off on his travels. A remarkable instance of Henry's quick attention to the novelties of our literature appears by his critical conversation with the antiquary, Thynne, who had presented to him his new edition of Chaucer.

His majesty soon discovered the novelty of "The Pilgrim's Tale," a bitter satire on the pride and state of the clergy, which at the time was ascribed to Chaucer. The king pointing it out to the learned editor, observed, in these very words, "William Thynne! I doubt this will not be allowed, for I suspect the bishops will call thee in question for it." The editor submitted, "If your grace be not offended, I hope to be protected by you." The king "bade him go! and fear not!" It is evident that his majesty was "not offended" at a severe satire on the clergy. But even Henry the Eighth could not always change at will his political position—the minister in power may find means to counteract even the absolute king. A great stir was made in Wolsey's parliament; it was even proposed that the works of Chaucer should be wholly suppressed,—some good-humoured sprite rose in favour of the only poet in the nation, observing that all the world knew that Dan Chaucer had never written anything more than fables! The authority of Wolsey so far prevailed, that "The Pilgrim's Tale" was suppressed, and it seems that the haughty prelate would willingly have suppressed the editor in his own person. THYNNE was an intimate acquaintance of SKELTON, whose caustic rhymes of "Colin Clout" had been concocted at his country-house. THYNNE, in this perilous adven-

ture of publishing "The Pilgrim's Tale," was saved from the talons of the cardinal, for this monarch's royal word was at all times sacred with him.

A literary anecdote of this monarch has been recently disclosed, which at least attests his ardour for information. When Henry wanted time, if not patience, to read a new work, he put copies into the hands of two opposite characters, and from the reports of these rival reviewers, the king ventured to deduce his own results. This method of judging a work without meditating on it, was a new royal cut in the road of literature, to which we of late have been accustomed; but it seemed with Henry rather to have increased the vacillations of his opinions, than steadied the firmness of his decisions.

The court of Henry displayed a brilliant circle of literary noblemen, distinguished for their translations, and some by their songs and sonnets. Parker, Lord Morley, was a favourite for his numerous versions, some of which he dedicated to the king; the witty Wyat, who always sustained the anagram of his name, was a familiar companion; nor could Henry be insensible to the elegant effusions of Surrey, unless his political feelings indisposed his admiration. It was at the king's command that Lord Berners translated the Chronicles of Froissart, and the volume is adorned by the royal

arms. Sternhold, the memorable psalm-enditer, was a groom of the chamber, and a personal favourite with his master; and Henry appointed the illustrious Leland to search for and to preserve the antiquities of England, and invested him with the honourable title of "The King's Antiquary."

Scholars too stood around the royal table, and the company at the palace excelled that of any academy, as Erasmus has told us. Learning patronised by a despot became a fashionable accomplishment, and the model for the court was in the royal family themselves. It is from this period that we may date that race of learned ladies which continued through the long reign of our maiden queen. Yet before the accession of Henry the Eighth, half a century had not elapsed when female literature was at so low an ebb, that Sir Thomas More noticed as an extraordinary circumstance that Jane Shore could read and write. When Erasmus visited the English court, he curiously observed that "The course of human affairs was changed; the monks famed in time passed for learning are become ignorant, and WOMEN LOVE BOOKS." Erasmus had witnessed at the court of Henry the Eighth the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, both of whom held an epistolary correspondence in Latin; the daughter of Sir Anthony Cook, and Lady Jane Grey, versed in Greek; and the Queen

Catherine Parr, his fervent admirer for his paraphrase on the four gospels. Erasmus had frequented the house of the Mores, which he describes as a perfect *musarum domicilium*. The venerable Nicholas Udall, a contemporary, has also left us a picture of that day. "It is now a common thing to see young virgins so nouzeld (nursed) and trained in the study of letters, that they willingly set all other vain pastimes at nought —reading and writing, and with most earnest study, both early and late." The pliable nobility of Henry the Eighth easily took the bend of the royal family, and among their daughters, doubtless, there were more learned women than are chronicled in Ballard's Memoirs. Lady Jane Grey meditating on Plato was not so uncommon an incident as it appears to us, in the insulated anecdote. The learning of that day must not be held as the pedantry of a later, for it was laying the foundations of every knowledge in the soil of England.

The king's more elegant tastes diffused themselves among the finer arts at a time when they were yet strangers in this land; his father's travelled taste had received a tincture of these arts when abroad, in Henry the Eighth they burst into existence with a more robust aptitude. He eagerly invited foreign artists to his court; but the patronage of an English monarch

was not yet appreciated by some of the finest geniuses of Italy; we lay yet too far out of their observation and sympathies; and it is recorded of one of the Italian artists, a fiery spirit, who had visited England, that he designated us as *quelle bestie Inglesi.* Raphael and Titian could not be lured from their studios and their blue skies; but, fortunately, a northern genius, whose name is as immortal as their own, was domiciliated by the liberal monarch, the friend of Erasmus and of More—Hans Holbein.

Among the musicians of Henry we find French, Italians, and Germans; he was himself a musician, and composed several pieces which I believe are still retained in the service of the Royal Chapel*. He had a taste for the gorgeous or grotesque amusements of the Continent, combining them with a display of the fine arts in their scenical effects. One memorable night of the Epiphany, the court was startled by a new glory, where the king and his companions appeared in a scene which the courtiers had never before witnessed. "It was a mask after the manner of Italy, a thing not seen afore in England," saith the chronicler of Henry's court-days. Once, to amaze a foreign embassy, and on a sudden to raise up a banqueting-house, the monarch set to work the right magicians; an architect, and a

* Sir John Hawkins' History of Music, vol. ii.

poet, and his master of the revels, were months inventing and labouring. The regal banqueting-house was adorned by the arts of picture and music, of sculpture and architecture; all was full of illusion and reality; the house itself was a pageant to exhibit a pageant. The magnificent prince was himself so pleased, that he anxiously stopped his visitors at the points of sight most favourable to catch the illusion of the perspective. A monarch of such fine tastes and gorgeous fancies would create the artists who are the true inventors.

BOOKS OF THE PEOPLE.

THE people of Europe, who had no other knowledge of languages than their own uncultivated dialects, seem to have possessed what, if we may so dignify it, we would call a fugitive literature of their own. It is obvious that the people could not be ignorant of the important transactions in their own land; transactions in which their fathers had been the spectators or the actors, the sons would perpetuate by their traditions; the names of their heroes had not died with them in the battle-field. Nor would the villain's subjection to the feudal lord spoil the merriment of the land, nor dull the quip of natural facetiousness.

Before the people had national books they had national songs. Even at a period so obscure as the days of Charlemagne there were "*most ancient songs*, in which the act and wars of the old kings were sung." These songs which, the Secretary of Charlemagne has informed us, were sedulously collected by the command of that great monarch, are described by the Secretary, according to his classical taste, as *barbara et antiquissima carmina;* "barbarous," because they were composed in the rude vernacular language; yet

such was their lasting energy that they were, even in the eighth century, held to be "most ancient," so long had they dwelt in the minds of the people! The enlightened emperor had more largely comprehended their results in the vernacular idiom on the genius of the nation than had the more learned and diplomatic Secretary. It was an ingenious conjecture, that, possibly, even these ancient songs may in some shape have come down to us in the elder northern and Teutonic romances, and the Danish, the Swedish, the Scottish, and the English popular ballads. The kindling narrative, and the fiery exploits which entranced the imagination of Charlemagne, mutilated or disguised, may have framed the incidents of a romance, or been gathered up in the snatches of old wives' tales, and, finally, may have even lingered in the nursery.

Our miserable populace had poets for themselves, whose looser carols were the joy of the streets or the fields. Unfortunately we only learn that they had such artless effusions, for these songs have perished on the lips of the singers. The monks were too dull or too cunning to chronicle the outpourings of a people whom they despised, and which assuredly would have often girded them to the quick. A humorous satire of this kind has stolen down to us in that exquisite piece of drollery and grotesque invention, "The Land of

Cokaigne *." They had historical ballads which were rehearsed to all listeners; and it was from these "old ballads, popular through succeeding times," that William of Malmesbury tells us, that "he learned more than from books written expressly for the information of posterity," though he will not answer for their precise truth. They had also political ballads. A memorable one, free as a lampoon, made by one of the adherents of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, in the fugitive day of his victory in 1264, occasioned a statute against "slanderous reports or tales to cause discord betwixt king and people," a spirit which by no means was put down by that enactment†. This was a ballad sung to the people, as appears by the opening line,—

"Sitteth all stille, and harkeneth to me!"

This ballad strikingly contrasts with another of unnerving dejection, after the irreparable defeat of the party, and the death of the Earl of Leicester, which, it is remarkable, is written in French, having been probably addressed solely to that discomfited nobility who would sympathise with the lament‡.

* Mr. Ellis has preserved it entire, with notes which make it intelligible to any modern reader.

† Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, ii. 1.—"The liberty of abusing their kings and princes at pleasure, assumed by the good people of this realm, is a privilege of very long standing."

‡ The Political Songs of England have been recently given by

The people, or the inferior classes of society, who despised the courtly French then in vogue, formed such a multitude, that it was for them that ROBERT of GLOUCESTER wrote his Chronicle, and that ROBERT of BRUNNE translated the Chronicle of Peter Langtoft, and a volume of recreative tales from the French. The people even then were eager readers, or, more properly, auditors; and this further appears in the naïveté of our rhymer's prologue to this Chronicle. The monk tells us, that this story of England which he now shows in English, is not intended for the learned, but the illiterate; not for the clerk, but the layman;

"Not for the lerid, but the lewed *;"

and he describes the class, "they who take solace and mirth when they sit together in fellowship," and deem it "wisdom for to witten (to know)

"The state of the land, and haf it written."

The Hermit of Hampole expressly wrote his theological poems for the people, for those who could understand only English.

At a period when we glean nothing from any litera-

Mr. Thomas Wright, to whom our literature owes many deep obligations.

* *Lewed* Mr. Campbell interprets *low*, which is not quite correct. Hearne explains the term as signifying "the laity, laymen, and the illiterate."—The *layman* was always considered to be *illiterate*, by the devices of the monks.

ture of the people, we find that it had a positive existence; for two chronicles and a collection of tales and theological poems were furnished for them in their native idiom, by writers who unquestionably sought for celebrity. The people, too, had what in every age has been their peculiar property,—all the fragmentary wisdom of antiquity in those "Few Words to the Wise," so daily useful, or so apt in the contingencies of human life; proverbs and Æsopian fables, delightedly transmitted from father to son. The memories of the people were stored with short narratives; for a startling tale was not easily forgotten. They had songs of trades, appropriated to the different avocations of labourers. These were a solace to the solitary task-worker, or threw a cheering impulse when many were employed together. Such HALL aptly describes as

"Sung to the wheel, and sung unto the payle *."

These songs are found among the people of every country; and these effusions were the true poetry of the heart, which kept alive their social feelings. The people had even the greater works brought down for them to a diminutive size; the lays of minstrelsy were usually fragments of the metrical chronicles, or a

* It is to be regretted that Mr. JAMIESON, in his "Popular Ballads," was unavoidably prevented enlarging this class of his songs. He has given the carols of the *Boatmen*, the *Corn-grinders*, and the *Dairy-women*.—*Jamieson's Popular Ballads*, ii. 352.

disjointed tale from some romance*; such as the popular Fabliaux, which form the amusing collection of Le Grand.

These proverbs and these fables, these songs and these tales, all these were a library without books, till the day arrived when the people had books of their own, open to their comprehension, and responding to their sympathies. That this traditional literature was handed down from generation to generation, appears from the circumstance, that hardly had the printing-press been in use when a multitude of "the people's books" spread through Europe their rude instruction, or their national humour. They were even rendered more attractive by the expressive wood-cuts which palpably appealed to a sense which required no "cunning" to comprehend. Their piety and their terror were long excited by that variety of Satan and his devils, which were exhibited to their appalled imaginations—the mouth of hell gaping wide, and the crowd of the damned driven in by the flaming pitchforks. "The Calendar of Shepherds," originally a translation from the French, was a popular hand-book, and rich were its contents—a perpetual almanac, the saints' days, with the signs of the zodiac, a receptacle of domestic receipts, all the wisdom of proverbs, and all the mysteries of astrology, divinity, politics, and geo-

* Hearne's Preface to Peter Langtoft's Chronicle, xxxvii.

graphy, mingled in verse and prose. It was the encyclopedia for the poor man, and even for some of his betters.

The courtly favourites of a former age descended from the oriel window to the cottage-lattice; perpetuated in our "chap-books," sold on the stalls of fairs, and mixed with the wares of "the Chapman," they became the books of the people. "The Gestes" of Guy of Warwick and Sir Bevis of Hampton, and other fabulous heroes of chivalry, have been recognised in their humble disguise of the "Tom Thumb," and "Tom Hickathrift," and "Jack the Giant-Killer" of the people.

In France their "bibliothèque bleue," books now in the shape of pamphlets, deriving their name from the colour of their wrappers, preserves the remains of the fugitive literature of the people; and in Italy to this day several of the old romances of chivalry are cut down to a single paul's purchase, and delight the humble buyers. Guerin Meschino, of native origin, still retains his popularity. In Germany some patriotic antiquaries have delighted to collect this household literature of the illiterate. The Germans, who, more than any other nation, seem to have cherished the hallowed feelings of the homestead, have a term to designate this class of literature; they call these volumes *Volksbücher*, or "the people's books."

There existed a more intimate intercourse between the vernacular writers of Germany and our own than appears yet to have been investigated. "The Merry Jests of Howleglas," most delectable to the people from their grossness and their humours, is of German origin; and it has been recently discovered that "The History of Friar Rush," which perplexed the researches of Ritson, is a literal prose version of a German poem, printed in 1587*. "Reynard the Fox"—a most amusing Æsopian history—an exquisite satire on the vices of the clergy, the devices of courtiers, and not sparing majesty itself—an intelligible manual of profound machiavelism, displaying the trickery of circumventing and supplanting, and parrying off opponents by sleights of wit—was translated by Caxton from the Dutch.

This political fiction has been traced in several languages to an earlier period than the thirteenth century. The learned Germans hold it to be a complete picture of the feudal manners; and Heineccius, one of the most able jurists, declares that it has often assisted him in clearing up the jurisprudence of Germany, and that for the genius of the writer the volume deserves to be ranked with the classics of antiquity. The writer probably had good reasons for concealing his name, but his

* Foreign Quarterly Review, vol. 18.

intimacy with a court-life is apparent. He has dexterously described the wiles of Reynard, whose cunning overreached his opponents; his wit, his learning, his humour, and knowledge of mankind, are of no ordinary degree; and this favourite satire contributed, no less than the works of Erasmus, of Rabelais, and of Boccaccio, to pave the way for the Reformation. It was among the earliest productions of the press in Germany and in England, and became so popular here that on the old altar-piece of Canterbury cathedral are several paintings taken from this pungent satire. The modern Italian poet, CASTI, seems to have borrowed the plan of his famous political satire "Gl' Animali Parlanti" from Reynard the Fox.

The Germans have occasionally borrowed from us, as we also from the Italian jest-books, many of our "tales and quick answers;" the facetiæ of Poggius and Domenichi, and others, have been a fertile source of our own.

All tales have wings, whether they come from the east or the north, and they soon become denizens wherever they alight. Thus it has happened that the tale which charmed the wandering Arab in his tent, or cheered the Northern peasant by his winter-fire, alike held on its journey toward England and Scotland. Dr. Leyden was surprised when he first perused the

fabliaux of "The Poor Scholar," "The Three Thieves," and "The Sexton of Cluni," to recognise the popular stories which he had often heard in infancy. He was then young in the poetical studies of the antiquary, or he would not have been at a loss to know whether the Scots drew their tales from the French, or the French from their Scottish intercourse; or whether they originated with the Celtic, or the Scandinavian, or sometimes even with the Orientalists.

The genealogy of many a tale, as well as the humours of native jesters, from the days of Henry the Eighth to those of Joe Miller, who, as somebody has observed, now too begins to be ancient, may be traced not only to France, to Spain, and to Italy, but to Greece and Rome, and at length to Persia and to India. Our most familiar stories have afforded instances. The tale of Whittington and his Cat, supposed to be indigenous to our country, was first narrated by Arlotto, in his "Novella delle Gatte," in his "Facetie," which were printed soon after his death, in 1483; the tale is told of a merchant of Genoa. We must, however, recollect that Arlotto had been a visitor at the court of England. The other puss, though without her boots, may be seen in Straparola's "Piacevoli Notti." The familiar little Hunchback of the Arabian Nights has been a universal favourite; it may be found everywhere; in

"The Seven Wise Masters," in the "Gesta Romanorum," and in Le Grand's "Fabliaux." The popular tale of Llywellyn's greyhound, whose grave we still visit at Bethgelert, Sir William Jones discovered in Persian tradition, and it has given rise to a proverb, "As repentant as the man who killed his greyhound." In "Les Maximes des Orientaux" of Galland, we find several of our popular tales.

Bluebeard, Red-riding Hood, and Cinderella, are tales told alike in the nurseries of England and France, Germany and Denmark; and the domestic warning to the Lady Bird, the chaunt of our earliest day, is sung by the nurse of Germany*. All nations seem alike concerned in this copartnership of tale-telling; borrowing, adulterating, clipping, and even receiving back the identical coin which had circulated wherever it was found. Douce, one of whose favourite pursuits was tracing the origin and ramification of tales, to my knowledge, could have afforded a large volume of this genealogy of romance; but that volume probably reposes for the regale of the next century, that literary antiquary being deterred by caustic reviewers from the publication of his useful researches.

* Weber. *Brit. Bib.*, vol. iv.—The German Song of the Lady-bird is beautifully versified in the preface to "German Popular Stories," by the late Edgar Taylor.

The people, however, did not advance much in intelligence, even after the discovery of printing, for new works, which should have been designed for popular purposes, were still locked up in a language which none spoke and only the scholar read; and this, notwithstanding a noble example had been set by the Italians to the other nations of Europe. In the early days of our printing, the vernacular productions of the press were thrown out to amuse the children of society, fashioned as their toys. We have an abundance of poetical and prose facetiæ, all of which were solely adapted to the popular taste, and some of the writers of which were eminent persons. Few but have heard of "The Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham," and of "Scogin's Jests, full of witty mirth and pleasant shifts." These facetious works are said to be "gathered" by Andrew Borde*, a physician and humourist of a

* A calamity to which wits are incident is that of having their names prefixed to collections to give them currency. I do not know whether this has not happened to our author. "The Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham" are no doubt of great antiquity; they are characterised by a peculiar simplicity of silliness. "Scogin's Jests," of the sixty which we have, a very few tradition may have preserved, but they must have received in the course of time the addition of pointless jests, tales marred in the telling, and some things neither jest nor tale; and it is remarkable that these are always accompanied by an inane moralisation, while the more tolerable appear to be preserved in their original condition. Some future

very original cast of mind, and who professedly wrote for "the Commonwealth," that is, the people, many other works on graver topics, not less seasoned with drolleries. He was the first who composed medical treatises in the vernacular idiom. His "Breviarie of Health" is a medical dictionary, and held to be a "jewel" in his time, as Fuller records. In this alphabetical list of all diseases, his philosophy reaches to the diseases of the mind, whose cure he combines with that of the body, the medicine and the satire often pleasantly illustrating each other. From the "Dietarie of Health" the modern apostles of regimen might expand their own revelations; it contains many curious matters, not only on diet, but on the whole system of domestic economy, even to the building of a house, regulating a family, and choosing a good air to dwell in, &c. Another of his books, "the Introduction of Knowledge," is a miscellany of great curiosity, describing the languages and manners of different countries;

researcher may be so fortunate as to compare them with the first editions if they exist.

John Scogin was a gentleman of good descent, who was invited to court by Edward the Fourth for the pleasantry of his wit; he was a caustic Democritus, and gave rise to a proverbial phrase, "What says Scogin?" If he usually said two-thirds of what is ascribed to him in this volume, he had never given rise to a proverb. "The Merry Tales of the Madmen of Gotham" have been recently reprinted by Mr. Halliwell.

in it are specimens of the Cornish, Welsh, Irish, and Scotch languages, as also of the Turkish and Egyptian and others, and the value of their coins. The apt yet concise discrimination of the national character of every people, is true to the hour we are writing.

The writings of Borde incidentally preserve curious notices of the domestic life and of the customs and arts of that period. Whitaker, in his history of Whalley, has referred to his directions for the construction of great houses, in illustration of our domestic architecture. In all his little books much there is which the antiquary and the philosopher would not willingly pass by.

Andrew Borde was one of those eccentric geniuses who live in their own sphere, moving on principles which do not guide the routine of society. He was a Carthusian friar; his hair-shirt, however, could never mortify his unvarying facetiousness; but if he ever rambled in his wits, he was a wider rambler, even beyond the boundaries of Christendom, "a thousand or two and more myles;" an extraordinary feat in his day. He took his degree at Montpelier, was incorporated at Oxford, and admitted into the College of Physicians in London, and was among the physicians of Henry the Eighth. His facetious genius could not conceal the real learning and the practical knowledge which he derived from personal observation. Borde has received

hard measure from our literary historians. This ingenious scholar has been branded by Warton as a mad physician. To close the story of one who was all his days so facetious, we find that this Momus of philosophers died in the Fleet. This was the fate of a great humourist, neither wanting in learning or genius.

It is said that such was his love of "the Commonwealth," that he sometimes addressed them from an open stage, in a sort of gratuitous lecture, as some amateurs of our own days have delighted to deliver; and from whence has been handed down to us the term of "MERRY ANDREW."

In the limited circles which then divided society, the taste for humour was very low. We had not yet reached to the witty humours of Shakespeare and Jonson. Sir Thomas More's "Long Story," in endless stanzas, which Johnson has strangely placed among the specimens of the English language, was held as a tale of "infinite conceit," assuredly by the great author himself, who seems to have communicated this sort of taste to one of his family. Rastall, the learned printer, brother-in-law of More, and farther, the grave abbreviator of the statutes in English, issued from his press in 1525, "The Widow Edith's Twelve Merrie Gestys." She was a tricking widow, renowned for her "lying, weeping, and laughing," an ancient mumper, who had triumphed

over the whole state spiritual, and the temporality: travelling from town to town in the full practice of dupery and wheedling, to the admiration of her numerous victims. The arts of cheatery were long held to be facetious; most of the "Merrie Jests" consist of stultifying fools, or are sharping tricks, practised on the simple children of dupery. There is a stock of this base coinage. This taste for dupery was carried down to a much later period; for the "Merrie conceited jests of George Peele," and of Tarleton, are chiefly tricks of sharpers.

"The Hye Way to the Spyttel Hous," or as we should say, "the road to ruin," exposes the mysteries and craft of the venerable brotherhood of mendicancy and imposture; their ingenious artifices to attract the eye, and their secret orgies concealed by midnight; all that flourishes now in St. Giles's, flourished then in the Barbican. Not long after we have the first vocabulary of cant language of "The Fraternitye of Vacabondes;" whose honorary titles cannot be yet placed in Bankes' Extinct Peerage.

There were attacks on the fair sex in those days which were parried by their eulogies. We seem to have been early engaged in that battle of the sexes, where the perfections or the imperfections of the female character offered themes for a libel or a panegyric.

From the days of Boccaccio the Italians have usually paid their tribute to "illustrious women," notwithstanding the free insinuations of some malicious novelists; that people preceded in the refinement of social life the tramontani. England and France, in their ruder circle of society, contracted a cynicism which appears in a variety of invectives and apologies for the beautiful sex.

One of the most popular attacks of this sort was "The School-house of Women," a severe satire, published anonymously. One of the heaviest charges is their bitter sarcasm on the new dresses of their friends. The author, one Edward Gosynhyll, charmed, no doubt, by his successful onset, and proud in his victory, threw off the mask; mending his ambidextrous pen for "The Praise of all Women," called "Mulierum Pean," he acknowledged himself to be the writer of "The School-house." Probably he thought he might now do so with impunity, as he was making the *amende honorable.* Whether this saved the trembling Orpheus from the rage of the Bacchantes, our scanty literary history tells not; but his defence is not considered as the least able among several elicited by his own attack.

"The Wife lapped in Morels' Skins, or the Taming of a Shrew," was the favourite tale of the Petruchios of those days, where a haughty dame is softened into a

degrading obedience by the brutal command of her mate; a tale which some antiquaries still chuckle over, who have not been so venturous as this hero *.

All these books, written for the people, were at length consumed by the hands of their multitudinous readers; we learn, indeed, in Anthony à Wood's time, that some had descended to the stalls; but at the present day some of these rare fugitive pieces may be unique. This sort of pamphlet, Burton, the anatomist of melancholy, was delighted to heap together; and the collection formed by such a keen relish of popular humours, he actually bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, where, if they are kept together, they would answer the design of the donor; otherwise, such domestic records of the humours and manners of the age, diffused among the general mass, would bear only the value of their rarity.

* Several of these pieces are preserved in Mr. Utterson's "Select Pieces of Early Popular Poetry." This attack on women proved not a theme less fertile among our neighbours; how briskly the skirmish was carried on the notice of a single writer will show:— "Alphabet de l'Imperfection et Malice des Femmes, par J. Olivier, licencier aux loix, et en droit-canon, 1617;" three editions of which appeared in the course of two years. This blow was repelled by "Defense des Femmes contre l'Alphabet de leur pretendue Malice, par Vigoureux, 1617;" the first author rejoined with a "Réponse aux Impertinences de l'Aposté Capitaine Vigoureux, par Olivier, 1617." The fire was kept up by an ally of Olivier, in "Réplique à l'Anti-Malice du Sieur Vigoureux, par De la Bruyere, 1617." At a period earlier than this conflict, the French had, as well as ourselves, many works on the subject.

THE DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY A PRIMITIVE AUTHOR.

SIR THOMAS ELYOT is the first English prose writer who avowedly attempted to cultivate the language of his country. We track the prints of the first weak footsteps in this new path; and we detect the aberrations of a mind intent on a great popular design, but still vague and uncertain, often opposed by contemporaries, yet cheered by the little world of his readers.

ELYOT for us had been little more than a name, as have been many retired students, from the negligence of contemporaries, had he not been one of those interesting authors who have let us into the history of their own minds, and either prospectively have delighted to contemplate on their future enterprises, or retrospectively have exulted in their past labours.

This amiable scholar had been introduced at court early in life; his "great friend and crony was Sir Thomas More;" so plain Anthony à Wood indicates the familiar intercourse of two great men. Elyot was a favourite with Henry the Eighth, and employed on various embassies, particularly on the confidential one to Rome to negotiate the divorce of Queen Katherine.

To his public employments he alludes in his first work, "The Governor," which "he had gathered as well of the sayings of most noble authors, Greek and Latin, as by his own experience, he being continually trained in some daily affairs of the public weal from his childhood."

A passion for literature seems to have prevailed over the ambition of active life, and on his return from his last embassy, he decided to write books "in our vulgar tongue," on a great variety of topics, to instruct his countrymen. The diversity of his reading, and an unwearied pen, happily qualified, in this early age of the literature of a nation, a student who was impatient to diffuse that knowledge which he felt he only effectually possessed in the degree, and in the space, which he communicated it.

His first elaborate work is entitled, "The Boke of the Governor, devised by Sir Thomas Elyot," 1531,—a work once so popular, that it passed through seven or eight editions, and is still valued by the collectors of our ancient literature.

"The Governor" is one of those treatises which, at an early period of civilisation, when general education is imperfect, becomes useful to mould the manners and to inculcate the morals which should distinguish the courtier and the statesman. Elyot takes his future

"Governor" in the arms of his nurse, and places the ideal being amid all the scenes which may exercise the virtues, or the studies which he develops. The work is dedicated to Henry the Eighth. The design, the imaginary personage, the author and the patron, are equally dignified. The style is grave; and it would not be candid in a modern critic to observe that, in the progress of time, the good sense has become too obvious, and the perpetual illustrations from ancient history too familiar. The erudition in philology of that day has become a schoolboy's learning. They had then no other volumes to recur to of any authority, but what the ancients had left.

Elyot had a notion that, for the last thousand years, the world had deteriorated, and that the human mind had not expanded through the course of ages. When he compared the writers of this long series of centuries, the babbling, though the subtle, schoolmen, who had chained us down to their artificial forms, with the great authors of antiquity, there seemed an appearance of truth in his decision. Christianity had not yet exhibited to modern Europe the refined moralities of Seneca, and the curious knowledge of Plutarch, in the homilies of Saints and Fathers; nor had its histories of man, confined to our monkish annalists, emulated the narrative charms of Livy, nor the grandeur of Tacitus. Of

the poets of antiquity, Elyot declared that the English language, at the time he wrote, could convey nothing equivalent, wanting even words to express the delicacies, "the turns," and the euphony of the Latin verse.

A curious evidence of the jejune state of the public mind at this period, appears in this volume. Here a learned and grave writer solemnly sets forth several chapters on "that honest pastime of dancing," in which he discovers a series of modern allegories. The various figures and reciprocal movements between man and woman, "holding each other by the hand," indicate the order, concord, prudence, and other virtues so necessary for the common weal. The *singles* and *reprinses* exhibit the virtue of circumspection, which excites the writer to a panegyric of the father of the reigning sovereign. These ethics of the dance contain some curious notices, and masters in the art might hence have embellished their treatises on the philosophy of dance; for, "in its wonderful figures, which the Greeks do call *idea*, are comprehended so many virtues and noble qualities." It is amusing to observe how men willingly become the dupes of their fancies, by affecting to discover motives and analogies, the most unconnected imaginable with the objects themselves. Long after our polished statesman wrote, the Puritan

excommunicated the sinful dancer, and detected in the graceful evolutions of "the honour," the "brawl," and the "single," with all their moral movements, the artifices of Satan, and the perdition of the souls of two partners, dancing too well. It was the mode of that age thus to moralise, or allegorise, on the common acts of life, and to sanction their idlest amusements by some religious motive. At this period, in France, we find a famous *Veneur*, Gaston Phebus, opening his treatise on "hunting," in the spirit that Elyot had opened to us the mysteries of dancing. "By hunting, we escape from the seven mortal sins, and therefore, the more we hunt, the salvation of our souls will be the more secure. Every good hunter in this world will have joyance, glee, and solace, (*joyeuseté liesse, et deduit,*) and secure himself a place in Paradise, not perhaps in the midst, but in the suburbs, because he has shunned idleness, the root of all evil."

"The Boke of the Governor" must now be condemned to the solitary imprisonment of the antiquary's cell, who will pick up many curious circumstances relative to the manners of the age—always an amusing subject of speculation, when we contemplate on the gradations of social life. I suspect the world owed "The Governor," to a book more famous than itself—the *Cortegiano* of Castiglione, which appeared two years

before the first edition of this work of Elyot, and to whose excellence Elyot could have been no stranger in his embassies to his holiness, and to the emperor. But of "The Governor," and "The Cortegiano," what can we now say, but that three centuries are fatal to the immortality of volumes, which, in the infancy of literature, seemed to have flattered themselves with a perpetuity of fame.

It was, however, a generous design, in an age of Latin, to attempt to delight our countrymen by "the vulgar tongue;" but these "first fruits," as he calls them, gave their author a taste of the bitterness of "that tree of knowledge."

In a subsequent work, "Of the Knowledge which maketh a Wise Man," Elyot has recorded how he had laid himself open to "the vulgar." In the circle of a Court there was equal peril in moralising, which was deemed to be a rebuke, as in applying rusty stories, which were considered as nothing less than disguised personalities. "The Boke" was not thankfully received. The *persifleurs*, those butterflies who carry waspish stings, accounted Sir Thomas to be of no little presumption, that "in noting other men's vices he should correct *magnificat*." This odd neologism of "magnificat" was a mystical coinage, which circulated among these aristocratic exclusives who, as Elyot de-

scribes them, "like a galled horse abiding no plaisters, be always knapping and kicking at such examples and sentences as they do feel sharp, or do bite them." The chapters on "The Diversity of Flatterers," and similar subjects, had made many "a galled jade wince;" and, in applying the salve, he got a kick for the cure. They wondered why the knight wrote at all! "Other much wiser men, and better learned than he, do forbear to write anything." They inscribed modern names to his ancient portraits. The worried author exclaims—"There be Gnathos in Spain as well as in Greece; Pasquils in England as well as in Rome, &c. If men will seek for them in England which I set in other places, I cannot let (hinder) them." But in another work—"Image of Governance, 1540"—when he detailed "the monstrous living of the Emperor Heliogabalus," and contrasted that gross epicurean with Severus, such a bold and open execration of the vices of a luxurious Court could not avoid being obvious to the royal sensualist and his companions, however the character and the tale were removed to a bygone age.

In this early attempt to cultivate "the vulgar tongue," some cavilled at his strange terms. It is a striking instance of the simplicity of the critics at that early period of our language, that our author formally

explains the word *maturity*—"a Latin word, which I am constrained to usurp, lacking a name in English, and which, though it be strange and dark, yet may be understood as other words late comen out of Italy and France, and made denizens among us." Augustus Cæsar it seems had frequently in his mouth this word *matura*—do maturely! as "if he should have said, Do neither too much nor too little—too swiftly nor too slowly." Elyot would confine the figurative Latin term to a metaphysical designation of the acts of men in their most perfect state, "reserving," as he says, "the word ripeness to fruit and other things, separate from affairs, as we have now in usage." Elyot exults in having augmented the English language by the introduction of this Latin term, now made English for the first time! It has flourished, as well as this other, "the *redolent* savours of sweet herbs and flowers." But his ear was not always musical, and some of his neologisms are less graceful—"*an alective*," to wit; "*fatigate*," to fatigue; "*ostent*," to show, and to "*sufficate* some disputation." Such were the first weak steps of the fathers of our language, who, however, culled for us many a flower among their cockle.

But a murmur more prejudicial arose than the idle cavil of new and hard words; for some asserted that "the Boke seemed to be overlong." Our primeval

author considered that "knowledge of wisdom cannot be shortly declared." Elyot had not yet attained, by sufficient practice in authorship, the secret, that the volume which he had so much pleasure in writing could be over tedious in reading. "For those," he observes sarcastically, "who be well willing, it is soon learned—in good faith sooner than primero or gleek." The nation must have then consisted of young readers, when a diminutive volume in twelves was deemed to be "overlong." In this apology for his writings, he threw out an undaunted declaration of his resolution to proceed with future volumes.—"If the readers of my works, by the noble example of our most dear Sovereign Lord, do justly and lovingly interpret my labours, I, during the residue of my life, will now and then set forth such fruits of my study, profitable, as I trust, unto this my country, leaving malicious readers with their incurable fury." Such was the innocent criticism of our earliest writer—his pen was hardly tipped with gall.

As all subjects were equally seductive to the artless pen of a primitive author, who had yet no rivals to encounter in public, Elyot turned his useful studies to a topic very opposite to that of political ethics. He put forth "The Castle of Health," a medical treatise, which passed through nearly as many honour-

able editions as "The Governor." It did not however abate the number, though it changed the character of his cavillers, who were now the whole corporate body of the physicians!

The author has told his amusing story in the preface to a third edition, in 1541.

"Why should I be grieved with reproaches wherewith some of my country do recompense me for my labours, taken without hope of temporal reward, only for the fervent affection which I have ever borne toward the public weal of my country? 'A worthy matter!' saith one; 'Sir Thomas Elyot has become a physician, and writeth on physic, which beseemeth not a knight; he might have been much better occupied.' Truly, if they will call him a physician who is studious of the weal of his country, let men so name me."

But there was no shame in studying this science, or setting forth any book, being—

"Thereto provoked by the noble example of my noble master King Henry VIII.; for his Highness hath not disdained to be the chief author of an introduction to grammar for the children of his subjects.

"If physicians be angry that I have written physic in English, let them remember that Greeks wrote in Greek, the Romans in Latin, and Avicenna in Arabic, which were their own proper and maternal tongues.

These were paynims and Jews, but in this part of charity they far surmounted us Christians."

Several years after, when our author reverted to his "Castle of Health," the Castle was brightened by the beams of public favour. Its author now exulted that "It shall long preserve men, be some physicians never so angry." The work had not been intended to depreciate medical professors, but "for their commodity, by instructing the sick, and observing a good order in diet, preventing the great causes of sickness, or by which they could the sooner be cured." Our philosopher had attempted to draw aside that mystifying veil with which some affected to envelop the arcana of medicine, as if they were desirous "of writing in cypher that none but themselves could read." Our author had anticipated that revolution in medical science which afterwards, at a distant period, has been productive of some of the ablest treatises in the vernacular languages of Europe.

The patriotic studies of Elyot did not terminate in these ethical and popular volumes, for he had taxed his daily diligence for his country's weal. This appeared in "The Dictionary of Sir Thomas Elyot, 1535," a folio, which laid the foundation of our future lexicons, "declaring Latin by English," as Elyot describes his own labour.

Elyot had suffered some disappointments as a courtier in the days of Wolsey, who lavished the royal favours on churchmen. In a letter to Lord Cromwell, he describes himself with a very narrow income, supporting his establishment, "equal to any knight in the country where I dwell who have much more to live on;" but a new office, involving considerable expense in its maintenance, to which he had been just appointed, he declares would be his ruin, having already discharged "five honest and tall personages."—"I wot not by what malice of fortune I am constrained to be in that office, whereunto is, as it were, appendent loss of money and good name, all sharpness and diligence in justice now-a-days being everywhere odious." And this was at a time when "I trusted to live quietly, and, by little and little, to repay my creditors, and *to reconcile myself to mine old studies.*"

This letter conveys a favourable impression of the real character of this learned man; but Elyot had condescended abjectly to join with the herd in the general scramble for the monastic lands; and if he feigned poverty, the degradation is not less. There are cruel epochs in a great revolution; moments of trial which too often exhibit the lofty philosopher shrinking into one of the people. It is probable that he succeeded in his petition, for I find his

name among the commissioners appointed to make a general inquiry after lands belonging to the Church, as also to the colleges of the universities, in 1534.

But in this day of weakness Elyot sunk far lower than petitioning for suppressed lands. Elyot was suspected of inclining to Popery, and being adverse to the new order of affairs. His former close intimacy with Sir Thomas More contributed to this suspicion, and now, it is sad to relate, he renounces this ancient and honourable friendship! Peter denied his Master. "I beseech your good lordship now to lay apart the remembrance of the amity betwixt me and Sir Thomas More, which was but *usque ad aras*, as is the proverb, considering that I was never so much addicted unto him as I was unto truth and fidelity towards my sovereign lord." Was the influence of such illustrious friendships to be confined to chimney-corners? Had Elyot not listened to the wisdom, and revered the immutable fortitude, of "his great friend and crony?"—he, the stern moralist, who, in his "Governor," had written a remarkable chapter on "the constancy of friends," and had illustrated that passion by the romantic tale of Titus and Gesippus, where the personal trials of both parties far exceed those of the Damon and Pythias of antiquity, and are

so eloquently developed and so exquisitely narrated by the great Italian novelist.

The literary history of Sir THOMAS ELYOT exhibits the difficulties experienced by a primitive author in the earliest attempts to open a new path to the cultivation of a vernacular literature; and it seems to have required all the magnanimity of our author to sustain his superiority among his own circle, by disdaining their petulant criticism, and by the honest confidence he gathered as he proceeded, in the successive editions of his writings.

SKELTON.

At a period when satire had not yet assumed any legitimate form, a singular genius appeared in Skelton. His satire is peculiar, but it is stamped by vigorous originality. The fertility of his conceptions in his satirical or his humorous vein is thrown out in a style created by himself. The Skeltonical short verse, contracted into five or six, and even four syllables, is wild and airy. In the quick-returning rhymes, the playfulness of the diction, and the pungency of new words, usually ludicrous, often expressive, and sometimes felicitous, there is a stirring spirit which will be best felt in an audible reading. The velocity of his verse has a carol of its own. The chimes ring in the ear, and the thoughts are flung about like coruscations. But the magic of the poet is confined to his spell; at his first step out of it he falls to the earth never to recover himself. Skelton is a great creator only when he writes what baffles imitation, for it is his fate, when touching more solemn strains, to betray no quality of a poet—inert in imagination and naked in diction. Whenever his muse plunges into the long measure of heroic verse, she is drowned in no Heliconian stream.

Skelton seems himself aware of his miserable fate, and repeatedly, with great truth, if not with some modesty, complains of

"Mine homely rudeness and dryness."

But when he returns to his own manner and his own rhyme, when he riots in the wantonness of his prodigal genius, irresistible and daring, the poet was not unconscious of his faculty; and truly he tells,—

"Though my rime be ragged,
Tattered and jagged,
Rudely rain-beaten,
Rusty, moth-eaten,
If ye take well therewith,
It hath in it some pith."

Whether Skelton really adopted the measures of the old tavern-minstrelsy used by harpers, who gave "a fit of mirth for a groat," or "carols for Christmas," or "lascivious poems for bride-ales," as Puttenham, the arch-critic of Elizabeth's reign, supposes; or whether in Skelton's introduction of alternate Latin lines among his verses he caught the Macaronic caprice of the Italians, as Warton suggests; the Skeltonical style remains his own undisputed possession. He is a poet who has left his name to his own verse—a verse, airy but pungent, so admirably adapted for the popular ear that it has been frequently copied *, and has led

* George Ellis, although an elegant critic, could not relish "the Skeltonical minstrelsy." In an extract from a manuscript poem

some eminent critics into singular misconceptions. The minstrel tune of the Skeltonical rhyme is easily caught, but the invention of style and "the pith" mock these imitators. The facility of doggrel merely of itself could not have yielded the exuberance of his humour and the mordacity of his satire.

This singular writer has suffered the mischance of being too original for some of his critics; they looked on the surface, and did not always suspect the depths they glided over: the legitimate taste of others has revolted against the mixture of the ludicrous and the invective. A taste for humour is a rarer faculty than

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ascribed to Skelton, "The Image of Hypocrisy," and truly Skeltonical in every sense, he condemned it as "a piece of obscure and unintelligible ribaldry;" and so, no doubt, it has been accepted. But the truth is, the morsel is of exquisite poignancy, pointed at Sir Thomas More's controversial writings, to which the allusions in every line might be pointed out. As these works were written after the death of Skelton, the merit entirely remains with this fortunate imitator.

In the public rejoicings at the defeat of the Armada in 1589, a ludicrous bard poured forth his patriotic effusions in what he called "A Skeltonical Salutation, or Condign Gratulation," of the Spaniard, who, he says,—

"——In a bravado,
Spent many a crusado."

In a reprint of the poem of "Elynoure Rummynge," in 1624, which may be found in the Harl. Miscellany, vol. i., there is a poem prefixed which ridicules the lovers of tobacco; this anachronism betrays the imitator. At the close there are some verses from the Ghost of Skelton; but we believe it is a real ghost.

most persons imagine; where it is not indigenous, no art of man can plant it. There is no substitute for such a volatile existence, and where even it exists in a limited degree, we cannot enlarge its capacity for reception. A great master of humour, who observed from his experience, has solemnly told us, that "it is not in the power of every one to taste humour, however he may wish it; it is the gift of God; and a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him*."

Puttenham was the first critic who prized Skelton cheaply; the artificial and courtly critic of Elizabeth's reign could not rightly estimate such a wild and irregular genius. The critic's fastidious ear listens to nothing but the jar of rude rhymes, while the courtier's delicacy shrinks from the nerve of appalling satire. "Such," says this critic, "are the rhymes of Skelton, usurping the name of a Poet Laureat, being indeed but a rude rayling rhimer, and all his doings ridiculous—pleasing only the popular ear." This affected critic never suspected "the pith" of "the ridiculous;" the grotesque humour covering the dread invective which shook a Wolsey under his canopy. Another Elizabethan critic, the obsequious Meres, re-echoes the dictum. These opinions perhaps prejudiced the historian of our poetry, who seems to have appreciated them as the

* Sterne.

echoes of the poet's contemporaries. Yet we know how highly his contemporaries prized him, notwithstanding the host whom he provoked. One poetical brother * distinguishes him as "the Inventive Skelton," and we find the following full-length portrait of him by another †:—

"A poet for his art,
Whose judgment sure was high,
And had great practise of the pen,
His works they will not lie;
His termes to taunts did leane,
His talk was as he wrate,
Full quick of wit, right sharpe of wordes,
And skilful of the state;
* * * * *
And to the hateful minde,
That did disdaine his doings still,
A scorner of his kinde."

When Dr. Johnson observed that "Skelton cannot be said to have attained great elegance of language," he tried Skelton by a test of criticism at which Skelton would have laughed, and "jangled and wrangled." Warton has also censured him for adopting "the familiar phraseology of the common people." The learned editor of Johnson's Dictionary corrects both our critics. "If Skelton did not attain great elegance of language, he however possessed great knowledge of

* Henry Bradshaw. Warton, iii. 13.

† Thomas Churchyard.

it. From his works may be drawn an abundance of terms which were then in use among the vulgar as well as the learned, and which no other writer of his time so obviously (and often so wittily) illustrated. Skelton seems to have been fully aware of the condition of our vernacular idiom when he wrote, for he has thus described it:—

"Our natural tongue is rude,
And hard to be enneude
With polished termes lusty;
Our language is so rusty,
So cankered, and so full
Of frowards, and so dull,
That if I would apply
To write ordinately,
I wot not where to find
Terms to serve my mind."

It was obviously his design to be as great a creator of words as he was of ideas. Many of his mintage would have given strength to our idiom. Caxton, as a contemporary, is some authority that Skelton improved the language.

Let not the reader imagine that Skelton was only "a rude rayling rhimer." Skelton was the tutor of Henry the Eighth; and one who knew him well describes him, as—

"Seldom out of prince's grace."

Erasmus distinguished him "as the light and orna-

ment of British letters;" and one, he addresses the royal pupil, "who can not only excite your studies, but complete them." Warton attests his classical attainments: "Had not his propensity to the ridiculous induced him to follow the whimsies of Walter Mapes, Skelton would have appeared among the first writers of Latin poetry in England." Skelton chose to be himself; and this is what the generality of his critics have not taken in their view.

Skelton was an ecclesiastic who was evidently among those who had adopted the principles of reformation before the Reformation. With equal levity and scorn he struck at the friars from his pulpit or in his ballad, he ridiculed the Romish ritual, and he took unto himself that wife who was to be called a concubine. To the same feelings we may also ascribe the declamatory invective against Cardinal Wolsey, from whose terrible arm he flew into the sanctuary of Westminster, where he remained protected by Abbot Islip until his death, which took place in 1529, but a few short months before the fall of Wolsey. It is supposed that the king did not wholly dislike the levelling of the greatness of his overgrown minister; and it is remarkable that one of the charges subsequently brought by the council in 1529 against Wolsey—his imperious carriage at the council-board—is precisely one of the accusations of our

poet, only divested of rhyme; whence perhaps we may infer that Skelton was an organ of the rising party.

"Why come you not to Court?"—that daring state-picture of an omnipotent minister—and "The Boke of Colin Clout," where the poet pretends only to relate what the people talk about the luxurious clergy, and seems to be half the reformer, are the most original satires in the language. In the days when Skelton wrote these satires there appeared a poem known by the title of "Reade, and be not Wrothe," a voluminous invective against the Cardinal and the Romish superstitions, which has been ascribed by some to Skelton. The writer was WILLIAM ROY, a friar; the genius, though not the zeal, of ROY and SKELTON are far apart—as far as the buoyancy of racy originality is removed from the downright earnestness of grave mediocrity. Roy had been the learned assistant of Tyndale in the first edition of the translation of the New Testament, and it was the public conflagration at London of that whole edition which aroused his indignant spirit. The satire, which had been printed abroad, was diligently suppressed by an emissary of the Cardinal purchasing up all the copies; and few were saved from the ravage*; the author, however, escaped out of the country.

* After the death of the Cardinal it was reprinted, in 1546; but

In "The Crown of Lawrell" Skelton has himself furnished a catalogue of his numerous writings, the greater number of which have not come down to us. Literary productions were at that day printed on loose sheets, or in small pamphlets, which the winds seem to have scattered. We learn there of his graver labours. He composed the "Speculum Principis" for his royal pupil—

"To bear in hand, therein to read,"

and he translated Diodorus Siculus—

"Six volumes engrossed, it doth contain."

To have composed a manual for the education of a prince, and to have persevered through a laborious version, are sufficient evidence that the learned Skelton had his studious days as well as his hours of caustic jocularity. He appears to have written various pieces for the court entertainment; but for us exists only an account of the interlude of the "Nigramansir," in the pages of Warton, and a single copy of the goodly interlude of "Magnificence*," in the Garrick collection. If we accept his abstract personations merely as the

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the satire was weakened, being transferred from Wolsey and wholly laid on the clergy. The very rare first edition is reprinted in the Harleian Miscellany, by Parke, vol. ix. Tyndale has reproached his colleague with being somewhat artful and mutable in his friendships; but the wandering man proved the constancy of his principles, for as a heretic he perished at the stake in Portugal.

* It has passed through a reprint by the Roxburgh Club.

names, and not the qualities of the dramatic personages, "Magnificence" approaches to the true vein of comedy.

Skelton was, however, probably more gratified by his own Skeltonical style, moulding it with the wantonness of power on whatever theme, comic or serious. In a poem remarkable for its elegant playfulness, a very graceful maiden, whose loveliness the poet has touched with the most vivid colouring, grieving over the fate of her sparrow from its feline foe, chants a dirige, a paternoster, and an Ave Maria for its soul, and the souls of all sparrows. In this discursive poem, which glides from object to object, in the vast abundance of fancy, a general mourning of all the birds in the air, and many allusions to the old romances, "Philip Sparrow," for its elegance, may be placed by the side of Lesbia's Bird, and, for its playfulness, by the Ver Vert of Gresset.

But Skelton was never more vivid than in his Alewife, and all

> "The mad mummyng
> Of Elynour Rummyng,"—

a piece which has been more frequently reprinted than any of his works. It remains a morsel of poignant relish for the antiquary, still enamoured of the portrait of this grisly dame of Leatherhead, where her name and

her domicile still exist. Such is the immortality a poet can bestow*. "The Tunnyng of Elynoure Rummyng" is a remarkable production of THE GROTESQUE, or the low burlesque; the humour as low as you please, but as strong as you can imagine. Cleland is reported, in Spence's Anecdotes of Pope, to have said, that this "Tunnyng of Elynoure Rummyng" was taken from a poem of Lorenzo de' Medici. There is indeed a jocose satire by that noble bard, entitled I Beoni, the Topers; an elegant piece of playful humour, where the characters are a company of thirsty souls hastening out of the gates of Florence to a treat of excellent wine. It was printed by the Giunti, in 1568†, and therefore this burlesque piece could never have been known to Skelton. The manners of our Alewife and her gossips are purely English, and their contrivances to obtain their potations such as the village of Leatherhead would afford.

The latest edition of Skelton was published in the

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* A noble amateur laid on the shrine of this antiquated beauty 20*l.* to possess her rare portrait; and, on the republication of this portrait, Steevens wrote some sarcastic verses on the print-collectors in the European Mag. 1794; they show this famous commentator to have been a polished wit, though he pronounced the Sonnets of Shakespeare unreadable. These verses have been reprinted in Dibdin's Bibliomania.

† Roscoe's Lorenzo de' Medici, i. 290.

days of Pope, which occasioned some strictures in conversation from the great poet. The laureated poet of Henry the Eighth is styled "beastly;" probably Pope alluded to this minute portrait of "Elynoure Rummynge", and her crowd of customers. Beastliness should have been a delicate subject for censure from Pope. But surely Pope had never read Skelton; for could that great poet have passed by the playful graces of "Philip Sparrow" only to remember the broad gossips of "Elynoure Rummyng?"

The amazing contrast of these two poems is the most certain evidence of the extent of the genius of the poet; he who with copious fondness dwelt on a picture which rivals the gracefulness of Albano, could with equal completeness give us the drunken gossipers of an Ostade. It is true that in the one we are more than delighted, and in the other we are more than disgusted; but in the impartiality of philosophical criticism, we must award that none but the most original genius could produce both. It is this which entitles our bard to be styled the "Inventive Skelton."

But are personal satires and libels of the day deserving the attention of posterity? I answer, that for posterity there are no satires nor libels. We are concerned only with human nature. When the satirical is placed by the side of the historical character, they

reflect a mutual light. We become more intimately acquainted with the great Cardinal, by laying together the satire of the mendacious Skelton with the domestic eulogy of the gentle Cavendish. The interest which posterity takes is different from that of contemporaries; our vision is more complete; they witnessed the beginnings, but we behold the ends. We are no longer deceived by hyperbolical exaggeration, or inflamed by unsparing invective; the ideal personage of the satirist is compared with the real one of the historian, and we touch only delicate truths. What Wolsey was we know, but how he was known to his own times, and to the people, we can only gather from the private satirist; corrected by the passionless arbiter of another age, the satirist becomes the useful historian of the man.

The extraordinary combination in the genius of Skelton was that of two most opposite and potent faculties — the hyperbolical ludicrous masking the invective. He acts the character of a buffoon; he talks the language of drollery; he even mints a coinage of his own, to deepen the colours of his extravagance—and all this was for the people! But his hand conceals a poniard; his rapid gestures only strike the deeper into his victim, and we find that the Tragedy of the State

has been acted while we were only lookers-on before a stage erected for the popular gaze*.

* The first collection of some of the works of Skelton was made by Thomas Marshe in 1568. Another edition by an unknown editor was in 1736; the text of which is, as Gifford justly observed, execrable. Many of his writings still remain in their manuscript state—see Harleian MSS., 367, 2252; and many printed ones have not been collected. There is no task in our literature so desperately difficult as that of offering a correct text of this anomalous poet; but we may hope to receive it from the diligent labours of Mr. Dyce, so long promised; it would form one of the richest volumes of the Camden publications.

THE SHIP OF FOOLS.

THE Stultifera Navis, or Ship of Fools, composed in verse by Sebastian Brandt, a learned German civilian, is a general satire on society. It has been translated into verse, or turned into prose, in almost every European language; and no work of such dimensions has been made so familiar to general readers.

There are works whose design displays the most striking originality; but, alas! there are so many infelicitous modes of execution! To freight a ship with fools, collected from all the classes and professions of society, would have been a creative idea in the brain of Lucian, or another pilgrimage for the personages of Chaucer; and natural or grotesque incidents would have started from the invention of Rabelais. These men of genius would have sportively navigated their "Ship," and not have driven aboard fool after fool, an undistinguishable shoal, by the mere brutal force of the pen, only to sermonise with a tedious homily or a tritical declamation. Erasmus playfully threw out a small sparkling volume on folly, which we still open; Brandt furnishes a massive tome, with fools huddled

together; and while we lose our own, we are astonished at his patience.

The severity of this decision, we own, is that of a critic of the nineteenth century on an author of the sixteenth.

It is amusing to observe the perplexities of an eminent French critic, Monsieur Guizot, in his endeavour to decide on the "Stultifera Navis." A critic of his school could not rightly comprehend how it happened that so dull a book had been a popular one, multiplied by editions in all the languages of Europe. "It is," says M. Guizot, "a collection of extravagant or of gross *plaisanteries*—which may have been poignant at their time, but which at this day have no other merit than that of having had great success three hundred years ago." The salt of plaisanteries cannot be damped by three centuries, provided they were such; but our author is by no means facetious: he is much too downright; the tone is invariably condemnatory and exhortative; and the Proverbs, the Psalms, and Jeremiah, are more frequently appealed to than Cicero, Horace, and Ovid, who occasionally show their heads on his margin.

We must look somewhat deeper would we learn why a book which now tries our patience was not undeserving of those multiplied editions which have ascertained its popularity.

At the period when this volume appeared, we in the north were far removed from the urbanity and the elevated ethics of lettered Italy. Brandt took this general view of society at the time when the illustrious Castiglione was an ambassador to our Henry the Seventh, and was meditating to model the manners of his countrymen by his *Libro dell' Cortigiano;* and La Casa, by his *Galateo,* was founding a code of minute politeness. But neither France, nor Germany, nor England, had yet greatly advanced in the civil intercourse of life, and could not appreciate such exility of elegance, and such sublimated refinement. With us, the staple of our moral philosophy was of a homespun but firm texture, and had in it more of yarn than of silk. Men had little to read; they were not weary of that eternal iteration of admonition on whatever was most painful or most despicable in their conduct; their ideas were uncertain, and their minds remained to be developed; nothing was trite or trivial. In his wide survey of human life, the author addressed the mundane fools of his age in the manner level to their comprehension; the ethical character of the volume was such, that the Abbot Trithemus designated it as a divine book; and in this volume, which read like a homily, while every man beheld the reflection of his own habits and thoughts, he chuckled over the sayings and doings

of his neighbours. If any one quipped the profession of another, the sufferer had only to turn the leaf to find ample revenge; and these were the causes of the uninterrupted popularity of this ethical work.

"The Ship of Fools" is, indeed, cumbrous, rude, and inartificial, and was not constructed on the principles which regulate our fast-sailing vessels; yet it may be prized for something more than its curiosity. It is an ancient satire, of that age of simplicity which must precede an age of refinement.

If man in society changes his manners, he cannot vary his species; man remains nothing but man; for, however disguised by new modes of acting, the same principles of our actions are always at work. The same follies and the same vices in their result actuate the human being in all ages; and he who turns over the volume of the learned civilian of Germany will find detailed those great moral effects in life which, if the modern moralist may invest with more dignity, he could not have discovered with more truth. We have outgrown his counsels, but we never shall elude the vexatious consequences of his experience; and many a chapter in the "Ship of Fools" will point many an argument *ad hominum*, and awaken in the secret hours of our reminiscences the pang of contrite sorrows, or tingle our cheek with a blush for our weaknesses.

The truths of human nature are ever echoing in our breasts.

"The Ship of Fools," by Alexander Barclay—a volume of renown among literary antiquaries, and of rarity and price—is at once a translation and an original. In octave stanza, flowing in the ballad measure, Barclay has a natural construction of style still retaining a vernacular vigour. He is noticed by Warton for having contributed his share in the improvement of English phraseology; and, indeed, we are often surprised to discover many felicities of our native idiom; and the work, though it should be repulsive to some for its black-letter, is perfectly intelligible to a modern reader. The verse being prosaic, preserves its colloquial ease, though with more gravity than suits sportive subjects; we sometimes feel the tediousness of the good sense of the Priest of St. Mary Ottery.

The edition of 1570 of the "Ship of Fooles*" contains other productions of Barclay. In his "Eclogues," our good priest, who did not write, as he says, "for the laud of man," indulged his ethical and theological vein in pastoral poetry; and the interlocutors are citizens

* The wood-cuts in this edition are wretched; though in part they are copied from the fine specimens of the art which embellish the Latin version of Locherus.

disputing with men of the country, and poets with their patrons. To have converted shepherds into scholastic disputants or town-satirists was an unnatural change; but this whimsical taste had been introduced by Petrarch and Mantuan; and the first eclogues in the English language, which Warton tells us are those of Barclay, took this strange form—an incongruity our Spenser had not the skill to avoid, and for which Milton has been censured. The less fortunate anomalies of genius are often perpetuated by the inconsiderate imitation of those who should be most sensible of their deformity.

In the eclogues of Barclay, the country is ever represented in an impoverished, depressed state; and the splendour of the city, and the luxurious indulgence of the citizen and the courtier, offer a singular contrast to the extreme misery of the agriculturist. We may infer that the country had been deplorably ravaged or neglected in the civil wars, which, half a century afterwards, was to be covered by the fat beeves of the graziers of Elizabeth.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF SIR THOMAS MORE.

If the art of biography be the development of "the ruling passion," it is in strong characters that we must seek for the single feature. Learned and meditative as was Sir Thomas More, a jesting humour, a philosophical jocundity, indulged on important as well as on ordinary occasions, served his wise purpose. He seems to have taken refuge from the follies of other men by retreating to the pleasantry of his own. Grave men censured him for the absence of all gravity; and some imagined that the singularity of his facetious disposition, which sometimes seemed even ludicrous, was carried on to affectation. It was certainly inherent—it was a constitutional temper—it twined itself in his fibres—it betrayed itself on his countenance. We detect it from the comic vein of his boyhood when among the players; we pursue it through the numerous transactions of his life; and we leave him at its last solemn close, when life and death were within a second of each other, uttering three jests upon the scaffold. Even when he seemed to have quitted the world, and had laid his head on the block, he bade the

executioner stay his hand till he had removed his beard, observing, "that that had never committed any treason."

This mirthful mind had, indeed, settled on his features. ERASMUS, who has furnished us with an enamelled portrait of MORE, among its minuter touches reluctantly confessed that "the countenance of Sir Thomas More was a transcript of his mind, inclining to an habitual smile;" and he adds, "ingenuously to confess the truth, that face is formed for the expression of mirth rather than of gravity or dignity." But, lest he should derange the gravity of the German to whom he was writing, Erasmus cautiously qualifies the disparaging delineation—"though as far as possible removed from folly or buffoonery." MORE, however, would assume a solemn countenance when on the point of throwing out some facetious stroke. He has so described himself when an interlocutor in one of his dialogues addresses him—"You use to look so sadly when you mean merrily, that many times men doubt whether you speak in sport when you mean good earnest*."

The unaffected playfulness of the mind; the smile whose sweetness allayed the causticity of the tongue; the tingling pleasantry when pointed at persons; the

* Sir Thomas More's Workes, 127.

pungent raillery which corrected opinions without scorn or contumely; and the art of promptly amusing the mind of another by stealing it away from a present object—appeared not only in his conversations, but was carried into his writings.

The grave and sullen pages of the polemical labours of MORE, whose writings chiefly turn on the controversies of the Romanists and the Reformers, are perhaps the only controversial ones which exhibit in the marginal notes, frequently repeated, "a merrie tale." "A merry tale cometh never amiss to me," said MORE truly of himself. He has offered an apology for introducing this anomalous style into these controversial works. He conceived that, as a layman, it better became him "to tell his mind merrily than more solemnly to preach." Jests, he acknowledges, are but sauce; and "it were but an absurd banquet indeed in which there were few dishes of meat and much variety of sauces; but that is but an unpleasant one where there were no sauce at all."

The massive folio of SIR THOMAS MORE's "English Works *" remains a monument of our language at a period of its pristine vigour. Viewed in active as well

* "The Workes of Sir Thomas More in the English Tongue, 1557, fo.," a venerable folio of nearly 1500 pages in double columns, is closely printed in black-letter.

as in contemplative life, at the bar or on the bench, as ambassador or chancellor, and not to less advantage where, "a good distance from his house at Chelsea, he builded the new building, wherein was a chapel, a library, and a gallery," the character, the events, and the writings of this illustrious man may ever interest us.

These works were the fertile produce of "those spare hours for writing, stolen from his meat and sleep." We are told that "by using much writing, towards his latter end he complained of the ache of his breast." He has himself acknowledged that "those delicate dainty folk, the evangelical brethren (so More calls our early reformers), think my works too long, for everything that is, they think too long." More alludes to the rising disposition in men for curtailing all forms and other ceremonial acts, especially in the church service.

More, however skilful as a Latin scholar, to promulgate his opinions aimed at popularity, and cultivated our vernacular idiom, till the English language seems to have enlarged the compass of its expression under the free and copious vein of the writer. It is only by the infelicity of the subjects which constitute the greater portion of this mighty volume, that its author has missed the immortality which his genius had else secured.

MORE has been fortunate in the zeal of his biographers; but we are conscious, that had there been a Xenophon or a Boswell among them, they could have told us much more. The conversations of Sir THOMAS MORE were racy. His was that rare gift of nature, perfect presence of mind, deprived of which the fullest is but slow and late. His conversancy with public affairs, combined with a close observation of familiar life, ever afforded him a striking aptitude of illustration; but the levity of his wit, and the luxuriance of his humour, could not hide the deep sense which at all times gave weight to his thoughts, and decision to his acts. Of all these we are furnished with ample evidence.

Domestic affection in all its naïve simplicity dictated the artless record of Roper, the companion of More, for sixteen years, and the husband of his adored daughter Margaret *. The pride of ancestry in the pages of his great-grandson, the ascetic Cresacre More, could not borrow the charm of that work whence he derived his enlarged narrative †. More than one beadsman, the

* Roper's Life of Sir Thomas More, which had been suppressed through the reign of Elizabeth, only first appeared in 1626 at Paris, when a Roman Catholic princess in the person of Henrietta the queen of Charles the First had ascended the throne of England; it was republished in 1729. There is also an elegant modern reprint by Mr. Singer.

† The Life by his great-grandson was printed in 1627, and

votaries of their martyr, have consecrated his memory even with their legendary faith *; while recent and more philosophical writers have expatiated on the wide theme, and have repeated the story of this great chancellor of England †.

"The child here waiting at table, whomever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man." It was thus that the early patron of More, Cardinal Morton, sagaciously contemplated on the precocity of More's boyhood. His prompt natural humour broke out at the Christmas revels, when the boy, suddenly slipping in among the players, acted an extempore part of his own invention. Yet this jocund humour, which never was to quit him to his last awful minute, at times indulged a solemnity of thought, as remarkable in a youth

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republished in 1726. This biography is the one usually referred to. Though with a more lucid arrangement, and a fuller narrative, than Roper's Life, the writer inherited little of the family genius, except the bigotry of his great ancestor.

* *Tres Thomæ.* The three Thomases are, Aquinas, à Becket, and More—by Dr. Thomas Stapleton. Another Life by J. H. is an abridgment, 1662. These writers, Romanists, as well as the great-grandson, have interspersed in their narrative more than one of those fabulous incidents and pious frauds, visions, and miracles, which have been the opprobrium of catholic biographers.

† Macdiarmid, in his "Lives of British Statesmen," has chiefly considered the political character of this Lord-Chancellor. Others have written lives merely as accompaniments to the editions of some of his Works.

of eighteen. In the taste of that day, he invented an allegorical pageant. These pageants consisted of paintings on rolls of cloth, with inscriptions in verse, descriptive of the scenical objects. They formed a series of the occupations of childhood, manhood, the indolent liver, "a child again," and old age, thin and hoar, wise and discreet. The last scenes exhibited more original conceptions. The image of DEATH, where under his "misshapen feet" lay the sage old man; then came "the Lady FAME," boasting that she had survived death, and would preserve the old man's name "by the voice of the people." But FAME was followed by TIME, "the lord of every hour, the great destroyer both of sea and land," deriding simple "Fame;" for "who shall boast an eternal name before me?" Yet was there a more potent destroyer than TIME; Time itself was mortal! and the eighth pageant revealed the triumph of ETERNITY. The last exhibited the poet himself, meditating in his chair,—he "who had fed their eyes with these fictions and these figures." The allegory of Fame, Time, and Eternity, is a sublime creation of ideal personifications. The conception of these pageants reminds one of the allegorical "Trionfi" of Petrarch; but they are not borrowed from the Italian poet. They were, indeed, in the taste of the age, and such pageants were exhibited in the streets; but the present gorgeous in-

vention, as well as the verses, were the fancies of the youthful More.

More in his youth was a true poet; but in his active life he soon deserted these shadows of the imagination.

A modern critic has regretted, that, notwithstanding the zeal of his biographers, we would gladly have been better acquainted with More's political life, his parliamentary speeches, his judicial decrees, and his history, as an ambassador and a courtier.

There is not, however, wanting the most striking evidence of More's admirable independence in all these characters. I fix on his parliamentary life.

As a burgess under Henry the Seventh, he effectually opposed a royal demand for money. When the king heard that "a beardless boy had disappointed all his purpose," the malice of royalty was wreaked on the devoted head of the judge his father, in a causeless quarrel and a heavy fine. When More was chosen the Speaker of the Commons, he addressed Henry the Eighth on the important subject of *freedom of debate.* There is a remarkable passage on the heat of discussion, and the diversity of men's faculties, which displays a nice discrimination in human nature. "Among so many wise men, neither is every one wise alike; nor among so many alike well-witted, every man alike well-spoken; and it often happeneth, that likewise as much

folly is uttered with painted polished speeches, so many boisterous and rude in language see deep, indeed, and give right substantial counsel. And since also in matters of great importance, the mind is so often occupied in the matter, that a man rather studies what to say than how, by reason whereof the wisest man and best-spoken in a whole country fortuneth, while his mind is fervent in the matter, somewhat to speak in such wise as he would afterward wish to have been uttered otherwise; and yet no worse will had he when he spake it, than he had when he would gladly change it."

Once the potent Cardinal, irritated at the free language of the Commons, to awe the House, came down in person, amid the blazonry of all the insignia of his multiform state. To check his arrogance, it was debated whether the minister should be only admitted with a few lords. MORE suggested, that as WOLSEY had lately taxed the lightness of their tongues, "it would not be amiss to receive him in all his pomp, with his (silver) pillars, emblems of his ecclesiastical power, as a pillar of the church, his maces, his pole-axes, his crosses, his hat, and his great seal too, to the intent that if he find the like fault with us hereafter, we may the more boldly lay the blame on those his Grace brings with him." The Cardinal made a solemn oration; and when he ceased, behold the whole House was struck by

one unbroken and dead silence! The minister addressed several personally—each man was a mute: discovering that he could not carry his point by his presence, he seemed to recollect that the custom of the House was to speak by the mouth of their Speaker, and WOLSEY turned to him. MORE, in all humility, explained the cause of the universal silence, by the amazement of the House at the presence of so noble a personage; "besides, that it was not agreeable to the liberty of the House to offer answers—that he himself could return no answer except every one of the members could put into his head their several wits." The minister abruptly rose and departed *re infectâ*. Shortly after, WOLSEY in his gallery at Whitehall told MORE, "Would to God you had been at Rome, Mr. More, when I made you Speaker!" "So would I too!" replied MORE; and then immediately exclaimed, "I like this gallery much better than your gallery at Hampton Court;" and thus, talking of pictures, he broke off "the Cardinal's displeasant talk."

This was a customary artifice with MORE. He withdrew the mind from disturbing thoughts by some sudden exclamation, or broke out into some facetious sally, which gave a new turn to the conversation. Of many, to give a single instance. On the day he resigned the chancellorship, he went after service to his wife's pew;

there bowing, in the manner and with the very words the lord chancellor's servant was accustomed to announce to her, that "My lord was gone!" she laughed at the idling mockery; but when assured, in sober sadness, that "My lord was gone!" this good sort of lady, with her silly exclamation of "Tillie vallie! Tillie vallie! will you sit and make goslings in the ashes?" broke out into one of those domestic explosions to which she was very liable. The resigned chancellor, now resigned in more than one sense, to allay the storm he had raised, desired his daughters to observe whether they could not see some fault in their mother's dress. They could discover none. "Don't you perceive that your mother's nose stands somewhat awry?" Thus by a stroke of merriment, he dissipated the tedious remonstrances and perplexing inquiries which a graver man could not have eluded.

At the most solemn moments of his life he was still disposed to indulge his humour. When in the Tower, denied pen and ink, he wrote a letter to his beloved Margaret, and tells her that "This letter is written with a coal; but that to express his love a peck of coals would not suffice."

His political sagacity equalled the quickness of his wit or the flow of his humour. He knew to rate at their real value the favours of such a sovereign as

Henry VIII. The King suddenly came to dine at his house at Chelsea, and while walking in the garden, threw his arm about the neck of the Chancellor. Roper, his son-in-law, congratulated More on this affectionate familiarity of royalty. More observed, "Son, the King favours me as (much as) any subject within the realm; howbeit I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France it should not fail to go!"

More seems to have descried the speck of the Reformation, while others could not view even the gathering cloud in the political horizon. He and Roper were conversing on their "catholic prince, their learned clergy, their sound nobility, their obedient subjects, and finally that no heretic dare show his face." More went even beyond Roper in his commendation, but he proceeded, "And yet, son Roper, I pray God that some of us, as high as we seem to sit upon the mountains, treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we would gladly be at league and composition with them, to let them have their churches quietly to themselves, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly to ourselves." Roper, somewhat amazed, alleged his reasons for not seeing any cause which could produce such consequences. The zeal of the juvenile catholic broke out into "a fume," which

More perceiving, with his accustomed and gentle artifice exclaimed merrily, "Well, son Roper, it shall not be so! it shall not be so!"

No one was more sensible than MORE that to gain over the populace it is necessary to descend to them. But when raillery passed into railing, and sarcasm sunk into scurrility, in these unhappy polemical effusions, our critics have bitterly censured the intolerance and bigotry of Sir THOMAS MORE. All this however lies on the surface. The antagonists of MORE were not less free, nor more refined. MORE wrote at a cruel crisis; both the subjects he treated on, and the times he wrote in, and the distorted medium through which he viewed the new race as the subverters of government, and the eager despoilers of the ecclesiastical lands, were quite sufficient to pervert the intellect of a sage of that day, and throw even the most genial humour into a state of exacerbation.

Our sympathies are no longer to be awakened by the worship of images and relics—prayers to saints—the state of souls in purgatory—and the unwearied blessedness of pilgrimages—nor even by the subtle inquiry, Whether the church were before the gospel, or the gospel before the church?—or by the burning of Tyndale's Testament, and "the confutation of the new church of Frere Barnes:" all these direful follies,

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which cost Sir Thomas More many a sleepless night and bound many a harmless heretic to the stake, have passed away, only, alas! to be succeeded by other follies as insane, which shall in their turn meet the same fate. Those works of MORE are a voluminous labyrinth; but whoever winds its dark passages shall gather many curious notices of the writer's own age, and many exquisite "merrie tales," delectable to the antiquary, and not to be contemned in the history of the human mind.

The impending Reformation was hastened by a famous invective in the form of "The Supplication of Beggars." Its flagrant argument lay in its arithmetic. It calculated all the possessions of the clergy, who though but "the four-hundredth part of the nation, yet held half of the revenues."

MORE replied to "The Supplication of the Beggars" by "The Supplications of the Souls in Purgatory." These he represented in terror at the sacrilegious annihilation of the masses said for their repose; and this with the Romanist was probably no weak argument in that day.

MORE more reasonably ridicules the extravagance of the estimates. Such accounts, got up in haste and designed for a particular purpose, are necessarily inaccurate; but the inaccuracy of a statement does not at all

injure the drift of the argument, should that be based on truth.

With MORE "the heretics" were but ordinary rebels, as appears by the style of his narrative. "A rabble of heretics at Abingdon did not intend to lose any more labour by putting up bills (petitions) to Parliament, but to make an open insurrection and subvert all the realm, to kill the clergy, and sell priests' heads as good and cheap as sheep's heads—three for a penny, buy who would! But God saved the church and the realm. Yet after this was there one John Goose roasted at Tower-hill, and thereupon some other John Goose began to make some gaggling awhile, but it availed him not. And now we have this gosling with his 'Supplication of Beggars.' He maketh his bill in the name of the beggars. The bill is couched as full of *lies*, as the beggar swarmeth full of *lice*. We neither will nor shall need to make much business about this matter; we trust much better in the goodness of good men."

The marriage of the clergy was no doubt at first abused by some. MORE describes one Richard Mayfield, late a monk and a priest, and, it may be added, a martyr, for he was burned. Of this man he says, "His holy life well declares his heresies, when being both a priest and a monk he went about two wives, one in Brabant, another in England. What he meant

I cannot make you sure, whether he would be sure of the one if t'other should happen to refuse him, or that he would have them both, the one here, the other there; or else both in one place, the one because he was priest, the other because he was monk *."

Such is the ludicrous ribaldry which runs through the polemical works of Sir Thomas More: the opposite party set no better example, and none worse than the redoubtable Simon Fish, the writer of "The Supplication of Beggars." Oldmixon expresses his astonishment that "the famous Sir Thomas More was so hurried by his zeal that he forgot he was a gentleman, and treated Mr. Fish with the language of a monk."

Writers who decide on other men and on other times by the spirit of their own, try human affairs by a false standard. More was at heart a monk. He wore a prickly hair-shirt to mortify the flesh; he scourged himself with the knotted cord; he practised the penance; and he appeals to miraculous relics as the evidences of his faith! I give his own words in alluding to the Sudorium, that napkin sent to king Abgarus, on which Jesus impressed the image of his own face: "And it hath been by like miracle in the thin corruptible cloth kept and preserved these 1500 years fresh and well preserved, to the inward comforts, spiritual re-

* Works, fo. 346.

joicing, and great increase of fervour in the hearts of good Christian people." To this he joins another similar miraculous relic, "the evangelist Luke's portrait of our blessed Lady, his mother *."

Such were considered as the evidences of the true faith of the Romanists; but MORE with his relics was then dealing in a damaged commodity. Lord Herbert has noticed the great fall of the price of relics at the dissolution of the monasteries: some which had been left in pawn no one cared to redeem.

"The History of King Richard the Third," which first appeared in a correct state in this folio, has given rise to "historic doubts" which led to some paradoxes. The personal monster whom MORE and SHAKESPEARE exhibited has vanished, but the deformity of the revolting parricide was surely revealed in the bones of the infant nephews. This, the earliest history in our vernacular literature, may still be read with delight. As a composition the critical justice of Lord Orford may be cited. "Its author was then in the vigour of his fancy, and fresh from the study of the Greek and Roman historians, whose manner he has imitated." The details in this history of a prince of the house of York, though they may be tinged with the gall of the Lancastrian Cardinal Morton, descend to us with the

* Works of Sir Thomas More, 113, col. 2.

weight of contemporary authority. It is supposed that MORE may have derived much of the materials of his history from his early patron, but the charms which still may retain us are the natural yet dramatic dialogue—the picturesque touches—and a style, at times, whose beauty three centuries have not wrinkled—and the emotions which such vital pages leave in the reader's mind*.

The "UTOPIA" of Sir THOMAS MORE, which being composed in Latin is not included in this great volume of his "Workes," may be read by the English reader in its contemporary spirited translation†, and more intelligibly in Bishop Burnet's version. The title of his own coinage has become even proverbial; and from its classical Latinity it was better known among foreigners even in Burnet's day than at home. This combination of philosophy, politics and fiction, though borrowed from the ideal republic of Plato, is worthy of an expe-

* Mr. Singer has furnished us with a correct reprint of this history. More's "Life of Richard the Third" had been given by our chroniclers from copies mutilated or altered. A work whose merits arise from the beauty of its composition admits of neither.

† The old translation, "by Raphe Robinson, 1551," has been republished by Dr. Dibdin, accompanied by copious annotations. Almost everything relating to the family, the life, and the works of the author, may be found in "the biographical and literary introduction." It is the first specimen of an edition where the diligence of the editor has not been wasted on trivial researches, or nugatory commentaries.

rienced statesman and a philosopher who at that moment was writing not only above his age, but, as it afterwards appeared, above himself. It has served as the model of that novel class of literature—political romances. But though the "Utopia" is altogether imaginary, it displays no graces of the imagination in an ingeniously constructed fable. It is the dream of a good citizen, and, like a dream, the scenes scattered and unconnected are broken into by chimerical forms and impracticable achievements. In times of political empiricism it may be long meditated, and the "Utopia" may yet pass through a million of editions before that new era of the perfectibility of the human animal, the millennium of political theorists, which it would seem to have anticipated.

This famous work was written at no immature period of life, for MORE was then thirty-six years of age. The author had clear notions of the imperfections of governments, but he was not as successful in proposing remedies for the disorders he had detected. A community where all the property belongs to the government, and to which every man contributes by his labour, that he may have his own wants supplied; a domestic society which very much resembles a great public school, and converts a citizen, through all the gradations of his existence, from form to form; and where every man,

like an automatical machine, must be fixed in his proper place,—supposes a society of passionless beings which social life has never shown, and surely never can. The art of carrying on war without combating, by the wiliness of stratagems; or procuring a peace by offering a reward for the assassination of the leaders of the enemy, with whom rather than with the people all wars originate; the injunction to the incurable of suicide; the paucity of laws which enabled every man to plead his own cause; the utmost freedom granted to religious sects, where every man who contested the religion of another was sent into exile, or condemned to bondage; the contempt of the precious metal, which was here used but as toys for children, or as fetters for slaves;—such fanciful notions, running counter to the experience of history, or to the advantages of civilised society, induced some to suspect the whole to be but the incoherent dreams of an idling philosopher, thrown down at random without much consideration. It is sobriety indulging an inebriation, and good sense wandering in a delirium. Burnet, in his translation, cautiously reminds his readers that he must in nowise be made responsible for the matter of the work which "he ventured" to translate. Others have conceived "the Utopia" dangerous for those speculators in politics who might imagine the author to have been serious. More him-

self has adjudged the book "no better worthy than to lye always in his own island, or else to be consecrated to Vulcan."

But assuredly many of the extraordinary principles inculcated in "the Utopia" were not so lightly held by its illustrious author. The sincerity of his notions may be traced in his own simple habits, his opinions in conversation, and the tenor of his invariable life. His contempt of outward forms and personal honours, his voluntary poverty, his fearlessness of death—all these afford ample evidence that the singularity of the man himself was as remarkable as the work he produced. The virtues he had expatiated on, he had contemplated in his own breast.

This singular, but great man, was a sage whose wisdom lay concealed in his pleasantry; a politician without ambition; a lord chancellor who entered into office poor, and left it not richer. When his house was to be searched for treasure, which circumstance had alarmed his friends, well did that smile become him when he observed that "it would be only a sport to his family," and he pleasantly added, "lest they should find out my wife's gay girdle and her gold beads." When the clergy, in convention, had voted a donation amounting to no inconsiderable fortune, "not for services to be performed, but for those which he had

chosen to do," More rejected the gift with this noble confession—"I am both over-proud, and over-slothful also, to be hired for money to take half the labour and business in writing that I have taken since I began." And when accused by Tyndale and others for being "the proctor of the clergy," and richly fed, how forcible was his expression! "He had written his controversial works only that God might give him thanks."

It happened however that his after-conduct in life, in regard to that religious toleration which he had wisely maintained in his ideal society, was as opposite as night to noon. Could he then have ever been earnest in his "Utopia?"—he who exults over the burning of a heretic who "could not agree that before the day of doom there were either any saint in heaven or soul in purgatory, or in hell either," for which horrible heresy he was delivered at last into the secular hands and "burned as there was never wretch I ween better worth*." This harmless and hapless metaphysical theologian did not disagree with More on the existence of saints, of souls, nor of hell. The heretic conceived—and could he change by volition the ideas which seemed to him just?—that no reward or punishment could be inflicted before the final judgment. A conversation of

* Sir Thomas More's Workes, 348.

five minutes might have settled the difference, for they only varied about the precise time!

In that great revolution which was just opening in his latter days, MORE seems sometimes to have mistaken theology for politics. A strange and mysterious change, such as the history of man can hardly parallel, occurred in the mind of MORE, by what insensible gradations is a secret which must lie in his grave.

This great man laid his head on the block to seal his conscience with his blood. Protestants have lamented this act as his weakness, the Romanists decreed a martyrdom. In a sudden change of system in the affairs of a nation, when even justice may assume the appearance of violence, the most enlightened minds, standing amidst their ancient opinions and their cherished prejudices subverted, display how the principle of integrity predominates over that of self-preservation.

THE EARL OF SURREY AND SIR THOMAS WYATT.

NOT many years intervened between the uncouth gorgeousness of HAWES, the homely sense of BARCLAY, the anomalous genius of SKELTON, and the pure poetry of Henry Howard the EARL OF SURREY. In the poems of SURREY, and his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt*, the elder, the age of taste, if not of genius, opens on us. Dryden and Pope sometimes seem to appear two centuries before their date. There is no chronology in the productions of real genius; for, whenever a great master appears, he advances his art to a period which labour, without creation, toils for centuries to reach.

The great reformer of our poetry, he who first from his own mind, without a model, displayed its permanent principles, was the poetic Earl of Surrey. There was inspiration in his system, and he freed his genius from the barbaric taste or the undisturbed dulness which had prevailed since the days of Chaucer. His ear was musical, and he formed a metrical structure

* "The Works of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt," by Dr. Nott, form an important accession to our national literature. If we cannot always agree with the conclusions of our literary antiquary, we must value the variety of his researches, not less profound than extensive.

with the melodies of our varied versification, rejecting the rude rhythmical rhyme which had hitherto prevailed in our poetry. He created a poetic diction, and graceful involutions; a finer selection of words, and a delicacy of expression, were now substituted for vague diffusion, and homeliness of phrases and feeble rhymes, or, on the other hand, for that vitiated style of crude pedantic latinisms, such as "purpúre, aureáte, pulchritúde, celatúre, facúnde," and so many others, laborious nothings! filling the verse with noise. The contemplative and tender SURREY charms by opening some picturesque scene or dwelling on some impressive incident. He had discerned the error of those inartificial writers, whose minute puerility in their sterile abundance detailed, till nothing was remembered, and described, till nothing was perceptible. Hitherto, our poets had narrowed their powers by moulding their conceptions by temporary tastes, the manners and modes of thinking of their day; but their remoteness, which may delight the antiquary, diminishes their interest with the poetical reader. SURREY struck into that secret path which leads to general nature, guided by his art: his tenderness and his thoughtful musings find an echo in our bosoms, and are as fresh with us as they were in the court of Windsor three centuries past.

These rare qualities in a poet at such a period, would of themselves form an era in our literature; but SURREY also extended their limits; the disciple of Chaucer was also the pupil of Petrarch, and the Earl of SURREY composed the *first sonnets* in the English language, with the amatory tenderness and the condensed style of its legitimate structure. Dr. Nott further claims the honour for Surrey of the invention of heroic blank verse; Surrey's version of Virgil being unrhymed.

When Warton suggested that Surrey borrowed the idea of blank verse from Trissino's *Italia Liberata*, he seems to have been misled by the inaccurate date of 1528, which he affixed to the publication of that epic. Trissino's epic did not appear till 1547*, and Surrey perished in the January of that year. It was indeed long a common opinion that Trissino invented the *versi sciolti*, or blank verse, though Quadrio confesses that such had been used by preceding poets, whose names he has recorded. The mellifluence and flexibility of the vowelly language were favourable to unrhymed verse; while the poverty of the poetic diction, and the unmusical verse of France, could never venture to show itself without the glitter of rhyme. The

* Tiraboschi, vol. vii.—Haym's Biblictheca Italiani. When Conybeare communicated the same information to Dr. Bliss, it must have been derive dfrom Warton.

heroic blank verse, however, was an after-thought of Surrey; he first composed his unrhymed verse in the long Alexandrine, had afterwards felicitously changed it for the decasyllabic verse, but did not live to correct the whole of his version. Surrey could not therefore have designed the pauses and the cadences of blank verse in his first choice, nor will they be found in his last. Nor can it be conceded that blank verse was wholly unknown among us. Webbe, a critic long after, in the reign of Elizabeth, considers the author of Pierce Ploughman, as "the first whom he had met with, who observed the quantity of our verse, *without the curiosity of rhyme.*"

Dr. Nott, with editorial ardour, considers that the unfinished model of Surrey was the prototype of all subsequent blank verse, and was also the origin of its introduction into dramatic composition. A sweeping conclusion! when we consider the artificial structure of our blank verse from the days of Milton, who, not without truth, asserted that "he first gave the example of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming." This indeed has been denied to Milton, by those who look to dates, and have no ear; and are apt to imagine that rhymless lines, mere couplets, with ten well-counted syllables in each, must necessarily form blank verse.

Dr. Nott, in quoting the eulogy of Ascham on this noble effort of Surrey "to bring our national poetry to perfection," has omitted to add what followed, namely, the censure of Surrey, for not having rejected our heroic verse altogether, and substituted the hexameter of Virgil, in English verse. It is therefore quite evident that Ascham had formed no conception of blank verse, no more than had Surrey, such as it was to be formed by the ear of Milton, and by some of his successors. All beginnings are obscure; something is borrowed from the past, and something is invented for the future; till it is vain to fix the gradations of invention which terminate in what at length becomes universally adopted.

Could the life, or what we have of late called the psychological history, of this poetic Earl of SURREY be now written, it would assuredly open a vivid display of fine genius, high passions, and romantic enthusiasm. Little is known, save a few public events; but the print of the footsteps show their dimension. We trace the excellence, while we know but little of the person.

The youth of SURREY, and his life, hardly passed beyond that period, betrayed the buoyancy of a spirit vehement and quick, but rarely under guidance. Reckless truth, in all its openness and its sternness, was his habit, and glory was his passion; but in this restless-

ness of generous feelings his anger too easily blazed forth. He was haughty among his peers, and he did not even scorn to chastise an inferior. We are not surprised at discovering that one of so unreserved a temper should in that jealous reign more than once have suffered confinement. But the youthful hero who pursued to justice a relative and a court favourite, for a blow, by which that relative had outraged Surrey's faithful companion—he who would eat flesh in Lent —he who issued one night to break the windows of the citizens, to remind them that they were a sinful race, however that might have been instigated by zeal for "the new religion"—all such things betrayed his enthusiastic daring, but his deeds, to become splendid, depended on their direction. The lofty notions he attached to his descent; his proud shield quartering the arms of the Confessor, which the duke, his father, dared not show to a jealous monarch; his feats of arms at the barriers, and his military conduct in his campaigns,

> "——— Who saw Kelsal blaze,
> Landrecy burnt, and battered Boulogne render;
> At Montreuil's gate hopeless of a recure (recovery),"

there, where that twin-spirit, his beloved associate, Clere, to save his wounded friend, had freely yielded his own life; his magnificence as a courtier, the companion of the princely Richmond; all "the joy and

feast with a king's son;" his own record of the brilliant days, and the soothing fancies of "proud Windsor;" "its large open courts;" "the gravelled ground for the foaming horse; "the palm-play;" "the stately seats and dances;" "the secret groves," and "the wild forest, with cry of hounds;" and more than all, the mysterious passion for "the fair Geraldine," cover the misty shade of Surrey with a cloud of glory, which, while it veils the man from our sight, seems to enlarge the object we gaze on.

We see this youth, he who first taught the English Muse accents she had never before tried, hurried from his literary seclusion to be immolated on a scaffold, by the arts of a remorseless rival, of him whose pride at last sent him to the block, and who signed the death-warrant of his own brother! It was at a moment when the dying monarch, as the breath was fleeting from his lips, once in his life was voiceless to condemn a state victim, that Somerset took up the stamp which Henry used, to affix it to the death-warrant of SURREY. Victim of his own domestic circle! The father disunited with the son, from fear or jealousy; the mother separated from the father, to the last vowing unforgiving vengeance; a sister disnatured of all kin, hastening to be the voluntary accuser of her father and her brother! These domestic hatreds were

the evil spirits which raged in the house of the Howards, and hurried on the fate of the accomplished, the poetic, the hapless Earl of Surrey.

A tale of such grandeur and such woe passed away unheeded even by a slight record, so inexpert were the few writers of those days, and probably so perilous was their curiosity. The pretended trial of Surrey, who being no lord of Parliament, was tried by a timorous jury at Guildhall, seems to have been studiously suppressed, and the last solemn act of his life, "the leaving it," is alike concealed. Even in the registers of public events by our chroniclers, they unanimously pass over the glorious name and the miserable death—to spare the monarch's or the victim's honour.

The poems of SURREY were often read, as their multiplied editions show; but of the noble poet and his Geraldine, tradition had not sent down even an imperfect tale. In this uncertainty, the world was disposed to listen to any romantic story of such genius and love and chivalry.

The secret history of SURREY was at length revealed, and the gravity of its discloser vouched for its authenticity. Who would doubt the testimony of plain Anthony à Wood?

SURREY is represented hastening on a chivalric expedition to Italy; at Florence he challenges the

universe, that his Geraldine was the peerless of the beautiful. In his travels, Cornelius Agrippa exhibited to Surrey, in a magical mirror, his fair mistress as she was occupied at the moment of inspection. He beheld her sick, weeping in bed, reading his poems, in all the grief of absence. This incident set spurs to his horse. At Florence he hastened to view the chamber which had witnessed the birth of so much beauty. At the court he affixed his challenge, and maintained this emprise in tilt and tourney. The Duke of Florence, flattered that a Florentine lady should be renowned by the prowess of an English nobleman, invited Surrey to a residence at his court. But our Amadis more nobly purposed to hold on his career through all the courts of Italy, shivering the lances of whoever would enter the lists, whether "Christian, Jew, or Saracen." Suddenly the Quixotism ends, by this paragon of chivalry being recalled home by the royal command.

This Italian adventure seemed congenial with the romantic mystery in which the poet had involved the progress of his passion for his poetic mistress. He had himself let us into some secrets. Geraldine came from "Tuscany;" Florence was her ancient seat, her sire was an earl, her dame of "princes' blood," "yet she was fostered by milk of an Irish breast;" and from her tender years in Britain "she tasted costly food with a

king's child." The amatorial poet even designates the spots hallowed by his passion; he first saw her at Hunsdon, Windsor chased him from her sight, and at Hampton Court "first wished her for mine!"

These hints and these localities were sufficient to irritate the vague curiosity of Surrey's readers, and more particularly of our critical researchers, of whom Horace Walpole first ventured to explain the inexplicable. With singular good fortune, and from slight grounds, Walpole conjectured that Geraldine was no Italian dame, but lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, one of the daughters of the Earl of Kildare; the family were often called the Geraldines. The Italian descent from the Geraldi was made out by a spurious genealogy. The challenge and the tournament no one doubted. But some harder knots were to be untied; and our theoretical historian, unfurnished by facts and dates, it has been recently shown, discovered some things which never existed.

But every writer followed in the track. Warton compliments the sagacity of Walpole, and embroiders the narrative. The historian of our poetry not only details the incident of the magical mirror, but adds that "the imagination of Surrey was *heated anew* by this *interesting spectacle!*" He therefore had no doubt of the reality; and indeed, to confirm the whole adventure of the romantic chivalry, he refers

the curious to a finely sculptured shield which is still preserved by the Dukes of Norfolk. The Italian adventures of Surrey, and all that Walpole had erroneously suggested, are fully accepted, and our critic observes, "Surrey's life throws so much light on the character and the subjects of his poetry, that it is almost impossible to consider the one without exhibiting the *few anecdotes* of the other." But the critical sagacity of Warton did not wholly desert him through all the circumstantial narrative, for suddenly his pen pauses, and he exclaims on these travels of Surrey, that "they have the air of a romance!"

And it was a romance! and it served for history many a year*! This tale of literary delusion may teach all future investigators into obscure points of history to probe them by dates.

It was long after the days of Walpole and Warton, and even of George Ellis, that it was discovered that these travels into Italy by Surrey had been transferred literally from an "Historical Romance." A great wit, in Elizabeth's reign, Tom Nash, sent forth in "the Life of Jack Wilton, an unfortunate traveller," this

* And, strange to add, it is still history! Mr. Godwin, in "The Lives of Necromancers," details every part of this apocryphal tale! And the Edinburgh reviewer very philosophically, not doubtful of its verity, accounts for all its supernatural magic, and clearly explains the inexplicable!

whole legend of Surrey. The entire fiction of Nash annihilates itself by its extraordinary anachronisms.

In what respect Nash designed to palm the imposture of his "Historical Romance" on the world, may be left to be explained by some "Jack Wiltons" of our own. He says "all that in this *phantastical treatise* I can promise is some *reasonable conveyance of history*, and variety of mirth." Must we trust to their conscience, for "the reasonable conveyance?"

We now trace the whole progress of this literary delusion.

On Surrey's ideal passion and on this passage misconceived—

> "From Tuscan came my lady's worthy race;
> Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat"—

the romancer inferred that Geraldine must be a fair Florentine; Surrey had alluded to the fanciful genealogy of the Geralds from the Geraldi. On this single hint the romancer sends him on his aërial journey in this business of love and chivalry.

This romance, of which it is said only three copies are known, was published in 1594. Four years after, DRAYTON, looking about for subjects for his Ovidian epistles, eagerly seized on a legend so favourable for poetry, and Geraldine and Surrey supplied two amatory epistles. Anthony à Wood, finding himself without

materials to frame a life of the poetic Surrey, had recourse to "the famous poet," as he calls Drayton—whom he could quote; for Drayton was a consecrated bard for the antiquary, since Selden had commented on his great topographical poem. But honest Anthony on this occasion was not honest enough. He did not tell the world that he had fallen on the romance itself, Drayton's sole authority. Literally and silently, our antiquary transcribed the fuller passages from a volume he was ashamed to notice, disingenuously dropping certain incidents which would not have honoured the memory of Surrey. Thus the "phantastical" history for ever blots the authentic tomes of the grave *Athenæ Oxonienses.* A single moment of scrutiny would have detected the whole fabricated narrative; but there is a charm in romance which bewitched our luckless Anthony.

Thus it happened that the romancer on a misconception, constructs an imaginary fabric; the poet Drayton builds on the romancer; the sober antiquary on both; then the commentators stand upon the antiquary. Never was a house of cards of so many stories. The foundation, Surrey's poetic passion, may be as fictitious as the rest; for the visionary Geraldine viewed in Agrippa's magic mirror was hardly a more mysterious shadow.

Not one of these writers was informed of what recent

researches have demonstrated. They knew not that this Earl of Surrey in boyhood was betrothed to his lady, also a child; one of the customs to preserve wealth or power in great families of that day. These historians were unfurnished with any dates to guide them, and never suspected that when Surrey is made to set off on his travels in Italy, after a Donna Giraldi who had no existence, he was the father of two sons, and "the fair Geraldine" was only *seven* years of age! that Surrey's first love broke out when she was *nine;* that he declared his passion when she was about *thirteen;* and finally, that Geraldine, having attained to the womanly discretion of *fifteen*, dismissed the accomplished Earl of Surrey, with whom she never could be united, to accept the hand of old Sir Anthony Brown, aged sixty. Lady Brown disturbs the illusion of Geraldine, in the modest triumph of sixteen over sixty.

Dr. Nott is in trepidation for the domestic morality of the noble poet; yet some of these amatory sonnets may have been addressed to his betrothed. He has perplexed himself by a formal protest against the perils of Platonic love, but apologises for his hero in the manners of the age. It appears that not only the mistress of Petrarch, but those of Bayard the chevalier "sans reproche," and Sir Philip Sidney, were married women, with as crystalline reputations as their lovers.

Nor should we omit the great friend of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, who was a s'aid married man, notwithstanding his romantic passion for Anne Bullen. The courtly imitators of Petrarch had made love fashionable. It is evident that Surrey found nothing so absorbing in his passion, whatever it might be; for whenever called into public employment, he ceased to be Petrarch—which Petrarch never could, and possibly for a want of occupation. A small quantity of passion, dexterously meted out, may be ample to inspire an amatorial poet. Neither Surrey nor Petrarch, accomplished lovers and poets, with all their mistress' coquetry and cruelty, broke their hearts in the tenderness of their ideas, or were consumed by "the perpetual fires" of their imagination.

We have now traced the literary delusion which long veiled the personal history of the Earl of Surrey, and which has duped so many ingenious commentators. The tale affords an additional evidence of that "confusion worse confounded" by truth and fiction, where the names are real, and the incidents fictitious; a fatality which must always accompany "Historical Romances." The same mischance occurred to "The Cavalier" of De Foe, often published under different titles, suitable to the designs of the editors, and which tale has been repeatedly mistaken for an authentic his-

tory written at the time. Under the assumed designation by "a Shropshire Gentleman," whole passages have been transferred from the Romance into the authentic history of Nichols's Leicestershire—just as Anthony à Wood had felicitously succeeded in his historical authority of Tom Nash's "Life of Jack Wilton."

In the story of SURREY and WYATT, one circumstance is too precious to be passed over. WYATT commenced as a writer nearly ten years before Surrey, and his earlier poetic compositions are formed in the old rhythmical school. His manuscripts, which still exist, bear his own strong marks in every line to regulate their cæsura; for our ancient poets, to satisfy the ear, were forced to depend on such artificial contrivances. It was in the strict intercourse of their literary friendship that the elder bard surrendered up the ancient barbarism, and by the revelation of his younger friend, studied an art which he had not himself discovered. Wyatt is an abundant writer; but he has wrought his later versification with great variety, though he has not always smoothed his workmanship with his nail. For many years Wyatt had smothered his native talent, by translation from Spanish and Italian poets, and in his rusty rhythmical measures. He lived to feel the truth of nature, and to practise happier art. Of his amatory

poems, many are graceful, most ingenious. The immortal one to his "Lute," the usual musical instrument of the lover or the poet, as the guitar in Spain, composed with as much happiness as care, is the universal theme of every critic of English poetry.

His defrauded or romantic passion for Anne Bullen often lends to his effusions a deep mysterious interest, when we recollect that the poet alludes to a rival who must have made him tremble as he wrote.

"Who list to hunt? I know where is an hind!
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore;
I am of them that furthest come behind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain;
Graven with diamonds, in letters plain,
There is written, her fair neck round about—
'Noli me tangere, for Cæsar's I am,
And wild to hold, though I seem tame.'"

We perceive Wyatt's keen perception of character in the last verse, admirably expressive of the playfulness and levity of the thoughtless but susceptible Anne Bullen, which never left her when in the Tower or on the scaffold. The poems of Wyatt accompanied the unhappy queen in her imprisonment; and it was Wyatt's sister who received her prayer-book with her last smile, for the block before her could not disturb the tenderness of her affections.

WYATT is an ethical poet, more pregnant with reflection than imagination; he was intimately conversant with the world; and it is to be regretted that our poet has only left three satires, the first Horatian Epistles we possess. These are replete with the urbanity and delicate irony of the Roman, but what was then still unexampled, flowing with the fulness and freedom of the versification of Dryden. Wyatt had much salt, and no gall.

WYATT excelled SURREY in his practical knowledge of mankind; he had been a sojourner in politic Madrid, and had been employed on active embassies. Surrey could only give the history of his own emotions, affections, and habits; he is the more interesting poet for us; but we admire a great man in Wyatt, one whose perception was not less subtile and acute, because it spread on a far wider surface of life.

WIAT, for so he wrote his name, was a great wit; as, according to the taste of his day, his anagram fully maintained. We are told that he was a nice observer of times, persons, and circumstances, knowing when to speak, and we may add, how to speak. That happened to Wyatt which can be recorded probably of no other wit: three prompt strokes of pleasantry thrown out by him produced three great revolutions—the fall of

Wolsey, the seizure of the monastic lands, and the emancipation of England from the papal supremacy. The Wyatts, besides their connexion with Anne Bullen, had all along been hostile to the great Cardinal. One day Wyatt entering the king's closet, found his majesty much disturbed, and displeased with the minister. Ever quick to his purpose, Wyatt, who always told a story well, now, to put his majesty into good humour, and to keep the Cardinal down in as bad a one, furnished a ludicrous tale of "the curs baiting a butcher's dog." The application was obvious to the butcher's son of Ipswich, and we are told, for the subject but not the tale itself has been indicated, that the whole plan of getting rid of a falling minister was laid down by this address of the wit. It was with the same dexterity, when Wyatt found the king in a passion on the delay of his divorce, that, with a statesman-like sympathy, appealing to the presumed tendency of the royal conscience, he exclaimed "Lord! that a man cannot repent him of his sin, but by the pope's leave!" The hint was dropped; the egg of the Reformation was laid, and soon it was hatched! When Henry the Eighth paused at the blow levelled at the whole ponderous machinery of the papal clergy, dreading from such wealth and power a revolution, besides the ungra-

ciousness of the intolerable transfer of all abbey lands to the royal domains, Wyatt had his repartee for his counsel :—"Butter the rooks' nests!"—that is, divide all these houses and lands with the nobility and gentry.

Wyatt should have been the minister of Henry; we should then have learned if a great wit, where wit was ever relished, could have saved himself under a monarch who dashed down a Wolsey.

Surrey and Wyatt, though often engaged, the one as a statesman, the other as a general, found their most delightful avocation in the intercourse of their studies. Their minds seemed cast in the same mould. They mutually confided their last compositions, and sometimes chose the same subject in the amicable wrestlings of their genius. It was a community of studies and a community of skill; the thoughts of the one flowed into the thoughts of the other, and we frequently discover the verse from one in the poem of the other. Wyatt was the more fortunate man, for he did not live to see himself die in the partner of his fame perishing on a scaffold, and he has received a poet's immortality from that friend's noble epitaph. In his epitaph Surrey dwells on every part of the person of his late companion; he expatiates on the excellences of the head, the face, the hand, the tongue, the eye, and the heart—but these

are not fanciful conceits; the solemnity of his thoughts and his deep emotions tell their truth. Wyatt's was

"A head, where Wisdom's mysteries did frame,
Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain,
As on a stithy,* where some work of fame
Was daily wrought."

* The smith's forge.

THE SPOLIATION OF THE MONASTERIES.

INCIDENTS of such an overwhelming nature in political history as are those of the Reformation can have no sudden origin. They are but the consequences of something which has preceded. In our country the suppression of the monasteries and the abbeys had been long prepared; it was not, and it could not have been, the temporary passions, nor the absolute will, of an arbitrary monarch, which by a word could have annihilated an awful power, had not the royal edict been but the echo of many voices. It was attacking but an aged power dissolving in its own corruption, which, blind with pride, looked with complacency on its own unnatural greatness, its political anasarca. Its opulence was an object it could not conceal from its enviers, and its paramount eminence was too heavy a yoke for its rising rivals. This power, in the language of the times, had "covered the land with an Egyptian darkness," and when appeared the "Godly and learned king," as the eighth Henry was called, he was saluted as "a Moses who delivered them from the bondage of Pharaoh." It is not therefore strange that the act which at a single blow annihilated the monastic orders

and their "lands and tenements" was hailed as the most patriotic which had been ever passed by an English sovereign. It made even a tyrannous and jealous monarch, who cut off more heads of men and women than any other on record, popular and extolled even in his latter days.

Henry the Eighth had paused at the blow he was about to level. The plunder was too monstrous even for the hand of an arbitrary monarch. Its division among the nobility and gentry was an expedient which removed the odium from royalty, and invested it with that munificence which dazzled the pride of Henry. In the vast harvest, the king refused the lion's share, looking for his safer portion in the secure loyalty of the new possessors to whom he transferred this vast and novel wealth.

As the scheme was managed, therefore, it was a compromise or copartnership of the king and his courtiers. The lands now lie the open prey of the hardy claimant or the sly intriguer; crowds of suppliants wearied the crown to participate in that national spoliation. Every one hastened to urge some former service or some present necessity as a colourable plea for obtaining a grant of some of the suppressed lands. A strange custom was then introduced, that of "begging for an estate." Kneeling to the king, and

specifying some particular lands, was found a convenient method to acquire them; and these royal favours were sometimes capriciously and even ludicrously bestowed. Fuller has a pleasant tale concerning one Master Champernoun. One day, observing two or three gentlemen waiting at a door through which the king was to pass, he was inquisitive to learn their suit, which they refused to tell. On the king's appearance, they threw themselves on their knees, and Champernoun was prompt in joining them, with an implicit faith, says Fuller, that courtiers never ask anything hurtful to themselves. They were begging for an estate. The king granted their petition. On this Champernoun claimed his share of the largesse; they remonstrated that he had never come to beg with them; he appealed to the king, and his brother beggars were fain to allot him the considerable Priory of St. Germains, which he sold to the ancestor of the present possessor, the Earl of St. Germains.

The king was prodigal in his grants; for the more he multiplied the receivers of his bounties, the more numerous would be the stanch defenders of their new possessions*: gratitude was the least of their merits.

* A fear of the restitution of these abbey-lands to their former uses appears to have prevailed long after their alienation. So late as in the reign of James the First, the founder of Dulwich College, in a

He counted on their resolution and their courage. The bait was relishing, and there were some, when land-grants became more scarce, whose voracity of reformation attempted to snatch at the lands of the universities, which had certainly gone, had not Henry's love of literature protected their trembling colleges. We have his majesty's own words, in replying to the suggestion of some hungry courtier:—"Ha! sirrah! I perceive the abbey-lands have fleshed you, and set your teeth on edge, to ask also those colleges. We pulled down sin by defacing the monasteries, but you desire to throw down all goodness by subversion of colleges. I tell you, sir, that I judge no land in England better bestowed than on our universities, which shall maintain our realm when we be dead and rotten. Follow no more this vein, but content yourselves with what you have already, or else seek honest means whereby to increase your worldhoods."

Lord Cromwell was the chief minister through whose mediation these novel royal grants of houses and lands

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dispute respecting the land, observes hypothetically—"If the state should be at any time pleased to returne all abbey lands to their former use, I must lose Dulwich, for which I have paid now 5000*l.*" At a later revolution, when the bishops' lands were seized on by the parliamentarians, many obtained those lands at easy rates, or at no rate at all; the greater part reverted, but, if I am not misinformed, there are still descendants of some of these parliamentarians who hold estates without title-deeds.

were distributed. There was evidently no chance of attention from his lordship without the most open and explicit offers of the grossest bribery. The Chancellor Audley, in bargaining with Lord Cromwell for the Abbey of St. Osyth, for "some present trouble in this suit," one day sent twenty pounds, with "my poor hearty good will, during my life." Perhaps the bribe, though only placed to account, had not its full weight, as the Chancellor does not appear, in the present instance, to have possessed himself of this abbey, though, afterwards, with the spoils of two rich monasteries, he built the most magnificent mansion in England, by which he perpetuated his own name in the once-famed Audley-End. Sir Thomas Elyot, in soliciting his lordship's mediation with the king to reward him with "some convenient portion of the suppressed lands," found it advisable to offer a conditional promise! "Whatsoever portion of land that I shall attain by the king's grace, I promise to give to your lordship the first year's fruits, with my assured and faithful heart and service." All were offering their hearts and the rest of their lives to Lord Cromwell.

As for the regal dispenser himself, so stupendous was his portion that it became necessary to found a court never heard of before—"The Court of Augmentation," an expressive designation, indicating its plenary

character, with its chancellor and its treasurer, and a long routine of officers, and none too many, "that the king might be justly dealt with," says Cowel "the interpreter," "for all the manors and parks, the colleges and chantries, and the religious houses which the king did not sell or give away;" that is, the selected prey which the royal eagle grasped in his own talons.

We are accustomed to trace the Reformation to Henry the Eighth, but in verity, small are the claims of this sovereign on posterity, for through all the multiplied ramifications of superstition, nothing under him was reformed. The other great event of the Reformation, the assumption of the spiritual supremacy, accorded with the national independence from a foreign jurisdiction. The policy was English, but it originated in the private passions of the monarch. Assuredly, had the tiara deigned to nod to the regal solicitor, then had "the Defender of the Faith" only given to the world another edition of his book against Luther.

In the last years of his reign, Henry vacillated in his uncertain reform. Sometimes leaning on one party and sometimes on another; he had lost the vigour of his better days. In his last parliament, though not without some difficulty, both from Protestant and Papist, they had voted for "the augmentation" of the royal revenue, their grant of the chantries. These chantries

were the last wrecks of the monastic lands. A single church had often several chantries attached to it. Chantries were endowments of estates by the sinners of that age for the benefit of having eternal masses sung for their departed souls. Henry on this occasion, in his last speech, strongly animadverts on the national disunion, and among his thanks mingles his menaces "to unite them in a more unacceptable way" than the tenderness with which at that moment he addressed them, for their concessions to his "Court of Augmentation."

It is also evident, by this able and extraordinary speech, that Henry would gladly have revoked his gift to the people of "the Word of God in their mother-tongue," as his majesty expresses himself. He had, indeed, already in part withdrawn the freedom he had granted by restricting it to a few persons, and only to be used on particular occasions. His majesty proceeds —"You lay too much stress on your own expositions and fantastical opinions. In such sublime matters you may easily mistake. This permission of reading the Bible is only designed for private information, not to furnish you with reprimanding phrases and expressions of reproach against priests and preachers. I am extremely sorry to find with how little reverence the Word of God is mentioned; how people squabble about

the sense; how it is turned into wretched rhyme, sung and jingled in every alehouse and tavern." This part of the king's speech was pointed at the general readers of the Scriptures; but his majesty did not discover any happier union among the clergy themselves, whom he roundly rates:—"I am every day informed that you of the clergy are declaiming against each other in the pulpit; and here your charity and discretion are quite lost in vehemence and satire. Some are too stiff in their old *mumpsimus*, and others too busy and curious in their new *sumpsimus* *. Thus the pulpits are, as it were, batteries against each other; the noise is hostile and ruinous. How can we expect the poor people should live friendly with their neighbours when they have such unhappy precedents of discord and dissension in those that teach them?"

Henry the Eighth rejected the Pope, but surely he died a Romanist. His unwieldy huge form was lifted up from his deathbed that he might prostrate himself, and, in the writer's language, who, however, was a a papist, "bury himself in the earth," to testify his reverence for "the real presence," when it was brought before him. His will, which, though it was put aside,

* This alludes to the well-known story of the old priest, who having blunderingly used *mumpsimus* for *sumpsimus*, would never be put right, alleging that "he hated all novelties."

was not the less the king's will, attested his last supplications to "the Virgin Mary, and all her holy company of Heaven." And he endowed an altar at Windsor, "to be honourably kept up with all things necessary for *a daily mass*, there to be read *perpetually while the world shall endure*." At the same time Henry endowed the poor knights of Windsor, upon condition that they should repeat their eternal masses for his soul. His magnificence was proportionate to his sins, but his perpetual masses, and the world, did not endure together.

With this fact before us, it is not therefore strange that foreign historians should have declared that our Henry the Eighth never designed a reformation, that he altered nothing; and had only raised a schism which those who contest the papal sovereignty in their civil affairs, as the Gallican church affected to do, would incline more to approve than to censure.

This monarch has been lauded as a patriot king for the suppression of the monasteries and the national emancipation from the tiara—but patriotism has often covered the most egotistical motives.

A CRISIS AND A REACTION.

ROBERT CROWLEY.

THERE is a state of transition in society which we usually call a crisis. A crisis is the most active moment of conflicting principles; the novel must extirpate the ancient, the ancient must eject the novel; the one looks to be continued and the other to be settled; it is a painful state of obstinate resistance, like that of two wrestlers when neither can cast down the other.

Fortunate are the people who have only to pass through a single crisis. But in the wrath of Providence there may be reserved another connecting crisis in the chain of human events, and this we term a reaction, usually accompanied by a retaliation; then comes the hoarded vengeance and the day of retribution on which issues no amnesty. In physics, action and reaction are equal; the reciprocation of any impulse not being greater than the impulse itself. Nature in her operations thus preserves an equilibrium; but the human hatreds and the partial interests which man has contrived for his own misery, can only find that equilibrium when he submits to a toleration. But a toleration is a partition of power, and predominance is the vitality

of a party. The catholic vengeance of Mary in its reaction, was out of all proportion greater than the protestant docility of Edward. Our nation has been more subject to this crisis and this reaction than perhaps any other. The reign of Charles the First was a crisis, that of Charles the Second a reaction; that of James the Second brought on a crisis, and the revolution of 1688 was the consequential reaction. But never have the people suffered more than during the three reigns of Edward the Sixth, Mary, and Elizabeth; a terrible intolerance disorganised the whole community: the conflict of old and of new creeds; of reciprocal persecutions, and alternate triumphs; of abjurations and recantations; of supple compliers and rabid polemics; and of pugilistic contests of the ejected with the ejectors—rapid scenes at once tragic and ludicrous.

Henry the Eighth died in 1547, and the accession of Elizabeth was in 1558. In this short period of eleven years, we were governed by two sovereigns, whose reigns, happily for the English people, were the shortest in our annals.

A new era was opening under the dominion of Henry, for he was a monarch of enlarged views. But the intellectual character of England in its vernacular literature was retarded by the events which occurred in the reigns of the two successors of this sovereign.

The nation indeed suffered no longer from the civil wars of the rival Roses; but another war now shook the empire with as merciless a rivalry—it was a universal conflict of opinions and dogmas. The governing powers themselves combated each other; and whether in opposing the reformer to the Romanist, or in restoring "the papelin" to root out "the gospeller," in these two mutable reigns, they neutralised or distracted the unhappy people; and while both maintained that they were proffering "the true religion," religion itself seemed to have lost its eternal truth. Edward with an infirm hand established, what from her short reign Mary, with her barbarous energy, could only imperfectly cast down.

Edward the Sixth, a boy-king, and a puppet-prince, invested with supreme power, acted without any volition of his own. We are prepossessed in his favour by his laborious diary. It is however remarkable that no solitary entry made in that book of life, no chance effusion, disturbs the uninterrupted equanimity. Whether the young king signs for the decapitation of his two uncles, or jots down the burning of Joan of Kent, an Arian, and another of a Dutchman, a Socinian, or records how a live goose suspended had its head sliced off by those who run at the ring, they seem equally to be matters of course, and by him were only distin-

guished by their respective dates. A nation's hope has always been the flattering painter of every youthful prince who dies immaturely; in the royal youth is lamented the irreparable loss of the future great monarch. But his father had been the most glorious youthful prince who ever adorned a throne; and it would be hard to decide, by the heartless chronicle of Edward, whether such an imperturbable spirit would have closed his life as a Nero or a Titus. This unhappy young prince must have felt the utter misery of his condition, for his was that curse of power, when in its exercise power itself becomes powerless, while its hands must be directed by another's. Had the reign of Edward the Sixth been prolonged, we should have had a polemical monarch, if we may judge by a collection of texts of Scripture, in proof of the doctrine of justification by faith, which exists in his own hand-writing, written in French, and dedicated to his uncle*.

This was a calamitous period for the nation; we derive little consolation when we discover that not more than three centuries ago our ancestors were a semi-barbarous race? We seem to be consulting the annals of some Asiatic dynasty, when we see a royal nephew tranquilly affixing his signature to the death-warrants

* It will be found in the additional manuscripts at the British Museum.

of his uncles; imprisonment or exile would have been too tender for these state-victims; we see one brother attainted by another, and the scaffold finally receiving both; and a Queen of England, in the captivity of the Romish superstition, hailing with a benediction her own *autos da fè*. What we should have gained had the accomplished prince lived, we cannot conjecture; but what the nation were spared by the death of the melancholy Mary, is not doubtful. Edward and Mary were opposite bigots; and both alike presumed that they were appointed to the work of sanctity; but every reform which requires to be carried on by coercion will long appear ambiguous to the better-tempered. The bigotry as well as the puerile taste of the prince appeared when he composed a comedy or interlude against "The Whore of Babylon," and "The False Gods;" but the brawls of polemics, at least, are more tolerable than torture and the sacrifice of fire.

It was one of the first evils of the Reformation, that the people were ill prepared to receive their emancipation. All sense of subordination rapidly disappeared in society; even the spell of devotion was dissolved; and the people seemed to consider that, having rid themselves of one spurious mode of religion, there was no longer any religion in the world. "Thus for religion ye keep no religion," wrote the learned Cheke, in once

addressing an armed multitude, who cruelly would not tolerate the Christianity of their neighbours.

An immature reformation is accompanied by certain unavoidable inconveniences. Its first steps are incomprehensible to the thoughtless, and too vague for the considerate, doing what it should not do, and leaving undone what it ought to do, comprehending too much, and omitting many things. A revolutionary reform breaks out with an ebullition of popular feelings; but in escaping from one tyranny, men do not necessarily enter into freedom. The reformer, in abandoning what is known, looks to an uncertain and distant futurity; the anti-reformer appeals to precedent, and clings to what is real—his good is positive, and his evil is not concealed. In the removal of some long-standing evils in civil society, some portion of good goes with them; for many of these served as expedients to supply certain wants, and therefore relatively were or may be beneficial. Even our old prejudices, when scrutinised, often will be found to have struck their roots in the common welfare. The complicate interests of civil society were at first a web woven by strong hands, so that much of the antiquated may retain its soundness, while the gloss of the new may set off but a loose and flimsy texture. These are some of the difficulties of an age of innovation, which may wisely check with-

out stopping the velocity of its movements. The only unerring reformer who partakes not of human infirmities, neither deceived by illusions, nor overcome by prejudices, and whose only wisdom is experience, must be that silent and unceasing worker of the destinies of man—Time!

At the period now before us, the crisis and the reaction were alike remarkable. The people who witnessed in four successive reigns four different systems of religion, mutable with the times, amidst their incertitude were in fact taught a religious scepticism. One of the great innovations in divine service was that of preaching from the pulpit, instead of reading set homilies or other prescribed lessons, by which the Romanists had reduced their whole devotion to a mumbled ritual and a mechanical service—formularies and forms which ceased to operate on the heart, and carried on a religion that was not religious.

The introduction of *preaching* appears to have been followed by an unhappy effect. Latimer, in the rude simplicity of his style, complains of some that went to church for the benefit of being "lulled into a nap." There was a still greater grievance in this novel custom of preaching; for from the pulpits the turbulent were rousing the passions of the people, by declaiming against what some termed "the abuses which ought to

be put away;" while others, persevering in their old doctrine, were alarming their auditors, for the loss of what had been put away. Pulpit thundered against pulpit; for it was not only the reformer, but the anti-reformer, who were the preachers. The fact was, that by an avaricious policy, "the court of augmentation," which had to pension the monks of the suppressed houses, filled up the vacant benefices as fast as they occurred, by appointing these annuitants, to curtail the pension-list. The enemy was thus settled in the camp of the reformers. This spirit of division was caught by the rude stage of that day in their comedies or interludes. This inundation of popular clamour was only to be stayed by coercion—by proclamations and orders in council. The Council of State issued their orders, or rather their instructions, how the preachers were to preach, and that none but the licensed should be permitted to ascend into the pulpit. Even Latimer himself was discountenanced for his apostolical freedoms, by inveighing against the gentry, who sent their sons to college, instead of educating them at home for the church. Academical degrees were abrogated as anti-Christian; Greek was heresy; and all human learning was to be vain and useless to "the gospellers." As the preachers were to be licensed, it came to the turn of the players and the printers not to enact or print their interludes,

without a special license from the privy-council; and at length the interludes were actually inhibited for "containing matter relating to sedition;" and this proclamation more particularly specifies those that "play in English." The Romanists had their interludes as well as the reformers. Bishop Percy once observed that the excellence of the drama, as every wise man would have it, is to form a supplement to the pulpit,—this literally occurred in the present instance; but the pulpit was itself as disorderly, to use the words of the proclamation, "as any light and fantastical head could list to invent and devise." Our most skilful delver into dramatic history, amidst his curious masses of disinterments, has brought up this proclamation. We must connect the state of these rude players with these rude preachers; the interludes were nothing more than reflections from the sermons; player and preacher were the same. By connecting these together, we form a juster notion of their purpose than we find in the isolated fact. There was now sedition in religion, as well as in politics.

The prevalent fervour scattered its sparks through all the ranks of society, and the thoughts of all were concentrated on the sole object of "the new religion." The Reformation was the great political topic in the court of Edward the Sixth; discussions in theology were no

longer confined to colleges or to the clergy. Our poets, ever creatures of their age, reflecting its temper, and who best tell its story, confined their genius to ballads and interludes, making rough sport for loungers and for the common people; or, in their quieter moods, were devoted to metrical versions from the Scriptures. In a history of our vernacular literature, the introduction of a versified psalter and of psalm-singing forms an incident; as the passion for psalmody itself is a portion of the history of the Reformation. "This infectious frenzy of sacred song," as Thomas Warton describes what he condemns as puritanic, we adopted from the practice of Calvin, who had introduced psalm-singing into the Geneva discipline, but really had himself borrowed it from the popularity of the first psalms in French metre, by Clement Marot. This natural and fine genius, as a commutation for an irregular life—and he had been imprisoned for eating flesh in Lent—was persuaded by the learned Vatable, the Hebrew Professor, to perform this signal act of penance. The gay novelty charmed the court, and was equally delightful to the people; every one chose the psalm which expressed his own personal feelings or described his own condition, adapted to some favourite air for the instrument or the voice. At the time it could have been little suspected that while Calvin was stripping the religious

service of its pageantry, and denuding it even of its decent ceremonies, he would have condescended to anything so human as a tune and a chorus; yet the austere reformer of Geneva showed no deficient knowledge of human nature, when he contrived to make men sing in concert, or carol in the streets, and shorten their work by a song cheerful or sad; for psalms there are for joy or for affliction, effusions for all hours, suitable to all ranks.

Another incident in which our vernacular literature was remotely connected, was the calling in of the ancient Rituals, Missals, and other books of the Latin service, and establishing the book of Common Prayer in the common language. But the people at large seemed reluctant to alter their antiquated customs, which habit had long endeared to them. While they had listened to an unintelligible Mass, they had, from their childhood, contracted a spirit of devotion. Their fathers had bowed to the Mass as a holy office from time immemorial; and from their childhood they had attached to it those emotions of holiness which were not the less so by their erroneous association of ideas. When their religion became a mere Act of Parliament, and their prayers were in plain English, all appeared an affair of yesterday. The church service seemed no longer venerable, the new priesthood no longer aposto-

lical; and the giddy populace protested against the common dues exacted by their neighbour the curate, for their marriages and baptisms and funerals. They forsook their churches, and even refused to pay tithes.

It is in revolutionary periods that we find men adapted for these rare occasions; who, had they not lived amid the commotions around them, had probably not emerged out of the sphere of their neighbours. Such minds quickly sympathise with popular grievances and popular clamours, and obtain their reformation, often at the sacrifice of their individual interest, as if the cause were their appointed vocation. They are advocates who plead, imbued even by all the prejudices of their clients; they are organs resounding the fulness of the passions around them: a character of this order is the true representative of the multitude; and we listen to all their cries in the single voice of such a man.

And such a man was ROBERT CROWLEY, a universal reformer through Church and State; whose unwearied industry run the pace of his zeal; whose declarations were as open as his designs were definite; and whose resolved spirit pursued its object in every variable form which his imagination could invent, and which incessant toil never found irksome.

Crowley had been a student at Magdalen College at

Oxford, and obtained a fellowship. At the close of the reign of Henry the Eighth, Crowley appears to have sojourned in "the great city;" and in that of Edward the Sixth, we must not be surprised to discover the Fellow of Magdalen established as a printer and bookseller, and moreover combining the elevated characters of poet and preacher. How it happened that a man of letters, and not undistinguished by his genius, adopted a mechanical profession, we may account for from the exigencies of the time. Possibly Crowley's fellowship was what Swift once called "a beggarly fettleship." In the hurried reform of the day, "the universal good" was attended by "a great partial evil." In the dissolution of the abbeys and priories they had also demolished those useful exhibitions proceeding from them, by which poor students were maintained at the universities. Many, thus deprived of the means of existence at college, were compelled to forsake their Alma-Mater and seek another course of life. It was probably this incident which had thrown this learned man among the people. How Crowley contrived to fulfil his fourfold office of printer, bookseller, poet, and preacher, with eminent success, the scanty notices of his life disappoint our curiosity. We would gladly enter into the recesses of this man's arduous life. Did he partition the hours of his day? What habits harmonised such

clashing pursuits? Was he a sage whose wisdom none of his followers have gathered? Was the shop of the studious man haunted by learned customers? When we think of the printer's press and the bookseller's counter, we are disposed to inquire, Where mused the poet, and where stood the preacher?

Crowley is the author of many controversial pieces, and some satirical poems reflecting the manners and the passions of his day, all which enjoyed repeated editions. But he was not less a favourite sermoniser. He touched a tremulous chord in the hearts of the people, and his opinions found an echo in their breasts. The pulpit and the press, perhaps, had been his voluntary choice, to print out what he had spoken ere it perished, or offer a supplement to a sermon in some awful tome of theology and reform. His Pulpit and his Press!—"those two prolific sources of faction," exclaimed Thomas Warton.

As a printer and book-vendor, Crowley is distinguished by that curiosity of research which led him to be the first publisher of "The Visions of Piers Ploughman," which had hitherto slept in the dust of its manuscript state. Warton restricts the merit of his discovery merely to the fervour of a controversialist eager to propagate his own opinions; and truly the bold spirit of reform, and the satirical strokes on the

ecclesiastics of the times of Edward the Third, in that remarkable and unknown author, were in unison with a Reformer in the age of Reformation. It must be confessed that the historian of our poetry cherished some collegiate prejudices, and that his native good humour is liable to change when his pen scourges a puritan and a predestinarian, as was Robert Crowley. But Warton wrote when he imagined that the suppressed absurdities of Popery required no longer any strong satire from a Calvinist; and as Crowley, too, lived to hold many dignities in the reign of Elizabeth, Crowley appeared to Warton to be the member of "a Church whose doctrines and polity his undiscerning zeal had a tendency to destroy." Strype has only ventured to describe Crowley as "an earnest professor of religion." The meek curate of Low-Leyton could not rise to the magisterial indignation of one of the "heads of houses," one who, at least, ought to have been, and who, I understand, probably missed the honour and the profit by his own ingenuous carelessness.

One of the most striking productions of this earnest Reformer, for its freedom, was his address to the assembled parliament. The title is expressive—"An Information and Petition against the *Oppressors of the Commoners of this Realm.* Compiled and imprinted for this only purpose, that among them that have to do in

the parliament, some godly-minded men may hereat take occasion to speak more in the matter than the author was able to write." Crowley too modestly alludes to any deficiencies of his own; his "information" is ample, and doubtless conveyed to the ear of those "who had to do in the parliament," what must have startled the oldest senator.'''

Who are "the oppressors of the poor commoners?" All the orders in society! the clergy—the laity—and, above all, "the Possessioners!"

This term, "the Possessioners," was a popular circulating coinage struck in the Mint of our reformer—and probably included much more than meets our ear. Every land-owner, every proprietor, was a "Possessioner." Whether in an orderly primitive commonwealth there should be any "Possessioners," might be a debatable point in a parliament composed of "the poor Commons" themselves, with our Robin for their speaker. But however this might be, "the Possessioners of this realm," as he calls them, "could only be reformed by God working in their hearts, as he did in the primitive church, when the *Possessioners* were contented and very willing *to sell their possessions, and give the price thereof to be common to all the faithful believers.*" This seems perfectly intelligible, but our reformer judged it required some explanation—as thus:

"He would not have any to take him as though he went about to make all things common." Doubtless, there were some propagators of this new revelation of a primitive Christian community, and as little doubt that Robin himself was one; for he adds, "If the Possessioners know how they ought to bestow their possessions," and he had already instructed them, in that case "he doubted not *it should not need to have all things made common.*" Such was the logic of this primitive radical reformer. A bland compromise, and a sturdy menace! This "grievance" of the "Possessioners" might be reformed, till poverty itself became a test of patriotism. They had yet to learn that to impoverish the rich is not to enrich the poor.

At that day they were bewildered in their notions of property, and their standards of value; they had neither discovered the sources nor the progress of the wealth of a nation. They murmured at importation, for which they seemed to pay the penalties, and looked on exportation as a conveyance of the national property to the foreigner. They fixed the prices at which all consumable articles were to be sold; the farmer's garner was inspected; the landlords who became graziers were denounced; forestallers and regraters haunted the privy councils of the king; the markets were never better supplied; and the people wondered why every article

was dearer. About this time the prices of all commodities, both in France and England, had gradually risen. The enterprise of commerce was probably working on larger capitals. As expenses increased, the landlords held that they were entitled to higher rents. In Crowley's denunciations "God's plague" is invoked against all "lease-mongers, pilling and polling the poor commoner." The Parliament of Henry the Eighth had legalised the interest of money at ten per cent.; Robin would have this "sinful act" repealed: loans should be gratuitous by the admonition in Luke, "Do ye lend, looking for no gain thereof." In this manner he applies the text against usury. They seemed to have no notion that he who bought ever intended to sell. This rude political economist proposed that all property should be kept stationary. No one should have a better portion than he was born to. Where then was to be found the portion of "the poor commoner" not born to any? or him whose loss of fortune was to be repaired by industry and enterprise? Prices advanced; double rents! double tithes! Our radical preacher attacks his brother ecclesiastics. "We can neither come into the world, nor remain in it, nor go out of it, but they must have a fleece! Let it be lawful to perform all their ministries by ourselves; we can lay an honest man in his grave without a set of carrion-crows scenting

their prey." The splendour of the ancient landed aristocracy and the prodigal luxury of the ecclesiastics more forcibly struck their minds than those silent arts of enlarged traffic which were perpetuating the wealth of the nation, and producing its concomitant evils.

While the people were thus agitated, divided, and distracted, the same state of disorder was shaking the more intelligent classes of society. Our mutable governments during four successive reigns gave rise to incidents which had not occurred in the annals of any other people. With the higher orders it was not only a conflict of the old and the new religions; public disputations were frequent, creeds were yet to be drawn from school-divinity, the artificial logic of syllogisms and metaphysical disputations held before mixed audiences, where the appellant, when his memory or his acumen failed him, was disconcerted by the respondent; but when the secular arm was called in, alternately as each faction predominated, and the lives and properties of men were to be the result of these opinions, then men knew not what to think, nor how to act. What had served as argument and axiom within a few years, a state proclamation condemned as false and erroneous. A dereliction of principle spread as the general infection of the times, and in despair many became

utterly indifferent to the event of affairs to which they could apply no other remedy than to fall in with the new course, whatever that might be.

The history of the universities exhibits this mutable picture of the nation. There were learned doctors who under Henry the Eighth abjured their papacy—under Edward vacillated, not knowing which side to lean on—under Mary recanted—and under Elizabeth again abjured. Many an apostate on both sides seemed converted into zealous penitents; persecutors of the friends with whom they had consorted, and deniers of the very opinions which they had so earnestly propagated. The facility with which some illustrious names are recorded to have given way to the pressure of events seems almost incredible; but, for the honour of human nature, on either side there were some who were neither so tractable nor so infirm.

The heads of houses stood for antiquity, with all its sacred rust of time; they looked on reform with a suspicious eye, while every man in his place marked his eager ejector on the watch. Under Edward the Sixth, Dr. Richard Smith, a potent scholastic, stood forth the stern advocate of the ancient order of things. However, to preserve his professorship, this doctor recanted of "his popish errors;" shortly afterwards he declared that it was no recantation, but a retractation signifying

nothing: to make the doctor somewhat more intelligible, and a rumour spreading that "Dr. Smith was treading in his old steps," he was again enforced to read his recantation, with an acknowledgment that "his distinction was frivolous, both terms signifying the same thing." He did not recant the professorship till Cranmer invited Peter Martyr from Germany to the chair of the disguised Romanist. The political Jesuit attended even the lectures of his obtrusive rival, took notes with a fair countenance, till suddenly burst the latent explosion. An armed party menaced the life of Peter Martyr, and a theological challenge was sent from the late professor to hold a disputation on "the real presence." Peter Martyr protested against the barbarous and ambiguous terms of the scholastic logic, and would only consent to explain the mystery of the sacrament by the terms of *carnaliter* and *corporaliter;* for the Scriptures, in describing the Supper, mention the flesh and the body, not the matter and substance. He would however indulge them to accept the terms of *realiter* and *substantialiter.*

There was "a great hubbub" at Oxford on this most eventful issue. The popish party and the reformers were alike hurried and busied; books and arguments were heaped together; the meanest citizen took his stand. The reforming visitors of Edward arrived; all

met, all but Dr. Smith, who had flown to Scotland, on his way to Louvain. However, he had left his able deputies, who were deep in the lore in which it appears Peter Martyr required frequent aid to get on. Both the adverse parties triumphed; that is usual in these logomachies; but the Romanists account for the success of the Reformed by the circumstance that their judges were Reformers.

Such abstruse subjects connected with religious associations, and maintained or refuted by the triumph or the levity of some haughty polemic, produced the most irreverent feelings among the vulgar. As the Reformation was then to be predominant, the common talk of the populace was diversified by rhymes and ballads; and it was held, at least by the wits, that there was "no real presence," since Dr. Smith had not dared to show himself. The papistical sacrament was familiarly called "Jack in the box," "Worm's meat," and other ludicrous terms, one of which has descended to us in the term which jugglers use of *hocus pocus*. This familiar phrase, Anthony Wood informs us, originated in derision of the words, "Hoc est corpus," slovenly pronounced by the mumbling priest in delivering the emblem as a reality. As opprobrious words with the populace indicate their furious acts, scandalous scenes soon followed. The censers were snatched from

the hands of the officiating priests; mass-books were flung at their heads; all red-lettered and illuminated volumes were chopped in pieces by hatchets: nor was this done always by the populace, but by students, who in their youth and their reform knew of no better means to testify their new loyalty to the visitors of Edward. One of the more ludicrous scenes among so many shameful ones, was a funereal exhibition of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, "the master of sentences," accompanied by Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, carried on biers, were tumbled into bonfires!

Five years after these memorable scenes, the same drama was to be repeated, performed by a different company of actors. Religion assumed a new face; that which had hardly been established was blasted by the name of heresy. All who had flourished under Edward were now called in question. The ancient tenants now ejected the new-comers; and affronted them by the same means they had themselves been affronted. No one at first knew how affairs were to turn out; some still clung to the reform; others were reverting to the old system. There were in fact for some time two religions at once in the university. The Common Prayer-Book in English was however but faintly read, while the Mass was loudly chanted. Jewel's letter to the Queen was cautiously worded. This zealous re-

former, in an unhappy moment, had yielded to his fears, and subscribed a recantation, which he soon after abjured before a Protestant congregation in Germany. When Peter Martyr heard the little bell ring to Mass, he sighed, and said, "that bell would destroy all the sound doctrine in the college." Gardiner gave him a safe-conduct homewards, which saved Peter Martyr from the insolent triumph of his rival, the scholastic Dr. Smith, and the Spanish friars with whom Mary supplied his place.

But the Marians also burned books, as likewise men!

The funeral of the schoolmen carried on their biers was too recent to be forgotten; and in return, all Bibles in English, and all the commentators on the Bible in the vernacular idiom, and which, we are told, "for their number seemed almost infinite," were thrown together in the market-place; and the lighted pyre proclaimed to Oxford the ominous flames of superstition, which consumed, not long after, opposite to Baliol College, the great unfortunate victims of reformation. There Latimer and Ridley bowed their spirits in the fires, while Cranmer, from the top of the Bocardo, witnessed the immolation, praying to God to strengthen them, and felt in anticipation his own coming fate. Then followed expulsions and emigrations. We have

a long list of names. Five years afterwards, such was the rapid change of scenery, these fugitives returned, to re-possess themselves of their seats, and were again and finally the ejectors under Elizabeth.

The history of this mutable period is remarkably shown in the singular incident of Catherine, the wife of Peter Martyr, and St. Frideswide.

Peter Martyr, when celibacy was the indispensable virtue of an ecclesiastic, brought his wife into his college, and also his bawling children. This spirit of reform was an abhorrence to the conscience and the quiet of the monks. A brothel, a prostitute, and a race of bastards, formed, according to the old inmates, the residence of the family of the reformer. The wife of Martyr died, and was interred near the relics of St. Frideswide. In the Marian days, it was resolved that the departed female should be condemned for heresy, and, since the corpse lay not distant from "that religious virgin St. Frideswide," it should be disinterred; and the Dean of Christ Church had the remains of Martyr's wife dug up and buried in the dunghill of his stable. Five years after, when Elizabeth reigned, the fate of the disturbed bones of the wife of Martyr was recollected, and, by command, with patience and ingenuity, the sub-dean collected from the dunghill the bones which time had disjointed, and placed them in a coffin

in the cathedral till they should be reburied with greater solemnity. A search was at the same time made by the sub-dean for the bones of St. Frideswide, which were not found where they had reposed for centuries. They had been hidden by some relic-adoring Catholic, to save them from the profane hands of the triumphant heretics of Edward the Sixth. In the obscurest part of the church, after much seeking, two silken bags were discovered, which had carefully preserved the relics of St. Frideswide. The sub-dean, who seems to have been at once a Romanist and a Reformer, considered that these bones of Peter Martyr's wife and the female saint should receive equal honours. He put them in the same coffin, and they were reinterred together. This incident provoked some scoffs from the witless, and some grave comments from those who stood more in awe of the corpse of the saint than of the sinner. Thus they were buried and coupled together; and a scholar, whether a divine or a philosopher his ambiguous style will not assure us, inscribed this epitaph :—

Hic jacet Religio cum Superstitione.

Did the profound writer insinuate a wish that in one grave should lie mingled together Religion with Superstition? or that they are still as inseparable as the bones of the wife of Peter Martyr with the bones of

St. Frideswide? Or did he mean nothing more than the idle antithesis of a scholar's pen?

At this uncertain crisis of the alliance between Church and State, the history of our English Bible exhibits a singular picture of the Church, which, from courting the favour of the great, gradually grew into its own strength, and rested on its own independence. We perceive it first attracting the royal eye, and afterwards securing the patronage of ministers. This phenomenon is observable in the Bible commanded to be printed by Edward the Sixth. There we view his majesty's portrait printed and illumined in red. Under Elizabeth, in the same Bible, omitting only the Papistic fish-days, we are surprised by the two portraits of the Earl of Leicester, placed before the Book of Joshua, and Cecil Lord Burleigh, adorning the Psalms. This is the first edition of the bishops' Bible. But subsequently, in 1574, we discover that the portraits of the royal favourites are both withdrawn, and a map of the Holy Land substituted, while the arms of Archbishop Parker seem to have been let into the vacancy which Lord Burleigh erst so gloriously occupied. The map of the Holy Land unquestionably is more appropriate than the portraits of the two statesmen; but the arms of the archbishop introduced into the Scriptures indicate a more egotistic spirit in the good prelate than, per-

haps, becomes the saintly humility of the pastor. The whole is an exhibition of that worldliness which in its first weakness is uncertain of the favour of the higher powers, but which cannot conceal its triumph in its full-grown strength; the great ecclesiastic, no longer collecting portraits of ministers, stamps his own arms on the sacred volume, to ratify his own power!

PRIMITIVE DRAMAS.

SCRIPTURAL dramas, composed by the ecclesiastics, furnished the nations of Europe with the only drama they possessed during many centuries. Voltaire ingeniously suggested, that GREGORY of Nazianzen, to wean the Christians of Constantinople from the dramas of Greece and Rome, composed sacred dramas; "The Passion of Christ" afforded one of the deepest interest. This remarkable transition might have occurred to this father of the Church, from the circumstance that the ancient Greek tragedy had originally formed a religious spectacle; and the choruses were turned into Christian hymns. Warton considered this fact as a new discovery in the obscure annals of the earliest drama*. The temples of the idols were for ever to be closed, for true religion and triumphant faith could show the miraculous Being who, blending the celestial with the human nature, was no longer the empty fable of the poet.

* Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poetry, iii. 195, 8vo edition; but it has been suggested that, as Saint Gregory composed more poetically, this earliest sacred drama was the production of a later writer, another Gregory, bishop of Antioch, A.D. 572. The dramatist, however, was an ecclesiastic, and that point only is important on the present occasion.

The gross simplicity of the inventors, and the undisturbed faith of the people, perceived nothing profane in the representation of an awful mystery by a familiar play. Christian or Pagan, the populace remains the same, and must be amused; the invention of scriptural plays would keep alive their religious faith, and sacred dramas would be a happy substitute for those of which they were denied evermore to be spectators.

This attempt to christianise the drama did not produce an immediate effect; but the Roman dramatic art could not fail to degenerate with the Roman empire; and the actors themselves were but the descendants of the mimi, a race of infamous buffoons, objects of the horror and the excommunication of the primitive fathers*.

In the obscurity of the medieval period, the origin of

* Tertullian, Chrysostom, Lactantius, Cyprian, and others, have vehemently declaimed against theatres and actors. It is doubtless the invectives of the Fathers which have been the true origin of the puritanic denouncement against "stage-plays" and "play-goers." The Fathers furnished ample quotations for Prynne in his "Histriomastix." It is, however, curious to observe that at a later day, in the thirteenth century, the great schoolman Thomas Aquinas greatly relaxed the prohibitions; confessing that amusement is necessary to the happiness of man, he allows the decent exercise of the histrionic art. See a curious tract, "The Stage Condemned," which contains a collection of the opinions of the Fathers, 1698. Riccoboni, "Sur les Théâtres," does not fail to appeal to the great schoolman.

these sacred dramas in Europe is lost. They are only incidentally noticed by those who had yet no notions of the drama. But though in England their remains are found at a much earlier period than in any other country, this seems to have been a mere accident from the utter neglect, or rather ignorance, of other nations of the origin of their own early drama; for these scriptural plays, judging by those which we possess, seem struck in the same mint, and are worked out of a common stock, and their appearance we can hardly doubt was coeval. Monks were the writers or inventors, and a general communication was kept up with Rome throughout every European realm. The subjects and the personages of these biblical dramas are treated with the same inartificial arrangement, and when translated it would be difficult to distinguish between a French, a Flemish, or an English mystery; and in their progressive state, branching out into three distinct classes, they passed in all countries through the same mutations.

It has been conjectured that they were first introduced into Italy, from its intercourse with the metropolis of the Greek Empire; but when we have recourse to its literary recorder, we gather nothing but ambiguity. Tiraboschi is dubious whether the early Italian mysteries exhibited in the year 1264 were anything more than a dumb show, or the processional display of

a religious pageant. Decided, on system, not to approve of such familiar exhibitions of sacred themes, the Jesuit has cautiously noticed two companies who evidently had performed a mystery, or miracle-play. In that piece there is a direction that "An angel and the virgin *sing*;" but our learned Jesuit will not venture even to surmise that "the virgin and the angel" *acted* their parts, but merely chanted a poem *. The literary antiquary Signorelli inclines to fix the uncertain date of the first sacred drama so late as in 1445 †. In France these early scriptural exhibitions were so little comprehended, that Le Grand D'Aussy, in his pretension that his nation possessed the drama in the thirteenth century, derives the origin of their mysteries from such pieces as the three fabliaux which he has given, as the earliest dramas‡. So little conversant in his day—not a distant

* Tiraboschi, iv.

† These dramas subsequently formed no uncommon spectacle in the streets of Italy, whence some Italian critics have fancied that the Gothic poem of Dante—his Hell, his Purgatory, and his Paradise—was an idea caught from the three-fold stage of a mystery which often fixed his musings in the streets of his own Florence. As late as in the year 1739, a mystery of "The Damned Soul," acted by living personages, was still exhibited by a company of strollers in Turin; we have the amusing particulars in a letter by Spence.—*Spence's Anecdotes*, 397. They have sunk to the humble state of puppet-shows, and are still exhibited at Carnival time at Venice and elsewhere.

‡ See the note and this extraordinary blunder in "Fabliaux," ii. 152.

one—were the French antiquaries with a subject which has of late become familiar to their tastes. We learn nothing positive of their "Mysteries" till their "Confraerie de la Passion" was incorporated in 1402.

The earliest of these representations necessarily would be in Latin*, and performed in monasteries by the ecclesiastics themselves, on festival days; in this state how could they have been designed for the people? Aware of this difficulty, and convinced that these holy plays were in their origin intended for popular instruction and recreation, it has been conjectured that the Latin mystery was accompanied by a pantomimic show, for the benefit of the people; but an impatient concourse could be little affected by the action of the performers, almost a incomprehensible as the language was unintelligible. The people, a great animal only to be fondled in one way, as usual, worked out their own wants; they taught learned clerks the only method by which they were to be amused, by having the same thing after their own fashion, and to be comprehended in their own language; and the day at last arrived when even the people themselves would be actors. In the obscurity of the medieval period, the literary antiquary has often to feel his way in the darkness, till

* Mr. Wright has published a curious collection of Latin mysteries of the twelfth century.

among uncertain things he fancies that he grasps the palpable. We are not furnished with precise dates, but some natural circumstances may account for the introduction of the mysteries in the *vernacular idiom.* About the eighth century, merchants carried on their trades in the great fairs, and to attract the people together, jugglers, minstrels, and buffoons were well paid, and the populace flocked. Such a multitudinous concourse appears to have created alarm among their great lords; and the ecclesiastics in vain proscribed these licentious revelries. It would be nothing more than a stroke of their accustomed policy if we imagine that, seeing the people were eager after such public entertainments, the monks should take them into their own hands; and offering a far more imposing exhibition than even the tricks of jugglers, combining piety with merriment, at once awe and delight the people by their scriptural histories and the legends of saints, in the language common to them all, thus enticing them from profane mummeries. It was a revolution in the history of the people, who, without education, seemed to grow learned in the mysteries and to be witnesses of miracles!

This account is not incongruous with another probably not less true, and which indeed has been received as indisputable among the more ancient literary

historians of France, and is well known by the verses of Boileau in his "Art of Poetry." Palmers and Pilgrims—the one returning from the East, bearing in their caps the hallowed palm-branch of Palestine, and the other from some distant shrine, their chaplets and cloaks covered with the many-coloured scallops—taking their stand in thoroughfares, and leaning on their staffs, while their pendent relics and images attracted the gazer, would win an audience from among the people. These venerable itinerants or semi-saints recited their sacred narratives in verse or even in prose; they had sojourned amid "the holy places," which they described; they had their adventures to tell, serious or comic; and that many of these have entered into the great body of ROMANCE, and were caught up by the Trouveres, we can easily imagine. These strollers excited the piety and contributed to the amusement of their simple auditors, who, in the course of time, occasionally provided for these actors a stage on a green in the vicinage of their town; thus an audience of burghers, and clowns, and no critics, was first formed. The ecclesiastics adopted performances so certain of popular attraction, and became the sole authors of these inartificial dramas, as they were of romances and chronicles. They had but one object, and knew to treat it only in one way. They imagined

that they were instructing the people by initiating them into scriptural history, the only history then known, and by keeping the sources of popular recreation in their own hands, they looked for their success in the degree they excited their terror or their piety, and not less their ribald merriment; and for the people the profane drollery and the familiar dialogue were as consistent with their feelings as the articles of their creed, for which they would have died, as well as laughed at.

These primeval dramas are not inconsiderable objects in the philosophy of literary history. In England *, and probably throughout Europe, they long kept their standing; they linger in Italy, and still possess devout

* Perhaps the very last remains of such rude dramatic exhibitions are yet to be traced in our counties—about Christmas-tide, or rather old Christmas, whose decrepit age is personified. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, and also in Dorsetshire, families are visited by "the great Emperor of the Turks" and St. George of England, or by the lion-hearted Richard. After a fierce onset, ringing their tin swords, the Saracens groan and drop. The Leech appears holding his phial; from some drops the dead survive their fate, and rise for the hospitable supper. The dialogue, however, has not been so traditional as the exhibition. The curious portion of these ancient exhibitions is therefore totally lost in the substitutions of the rude rustics. The Wassail songs, or the Christmas carols, have come down with fewer losses than these ancient "Tales of the Crusaders;" for the language of emotion, and the notice of old picturesque customs, cling to the memory, and endure with their localities. But for these we must travel far from the land of the Cockneys.

Spain. Not long since at Seville they had their mysteries adapted to the seasons—the Crucifixion for Good Friday, and the Nativity for Christmas, and the Creation whenever they chose; and a recent editor of the plays of Cervantes assures us, that these *Autos Sacramentales* still form a source of amusement and edification to the pilgrims at the Shrine of St. Jago de Compostella, which it seems still receives such visitors*.

These scriptural plays were known in England before 1119; they formed public performances in the metropolis in 1180. They were then confined to the monasteries, and when the audience required the space, they were exhibited in churches; and sometimes even in cemeteries. So true it is that the first theatres were churches and the first actors were churchmen. Some reprobated the sight of the priestly character, or the "fols clers," "the mad clerks," in their grotesque disguisings; if they were sanctioned by one pope, they were condemned by another. The clergy, except on some rare occasion, when exhibiting before royalty or nobility†, were at length not reluctant to yield their

* Bouterwek.

† The clergy long continued to assist at these exhibitions, if they did not always act in them. In 1417 an *English Mystery* was exhibited before the Emperor Sigismund, at the council of Constance, on the usual subject of the Nativity. The *English Bishops*

places to a new race of performers. In the metropolis they never lost their control over these representations, for they consigned them to the care of their inferior brethren, the parish clerks; but in provincial towns it was not long ere the people themselves discovered that they, with some little assistance from the neighbouring monasteries, were competent to take them into their own hands. The honest members of guilds or corporations, of mechanics and tradesmen, formed themselves into brotherhoods of actors, ambitious of displaying their mimetic faculty to their townsfolk. The play had now become the people's play, and the scale of the representation widened at every point; it was to be acted in an open plain, and it was to extend sometimes through eight days*. Such was the concourse of spectators, and indeed the performers were themselves a crowd. All were anxious to show themselves in some part, and such a play might require nearly a hundred personages. In a miracle-

had it rehearsed several days, that the actors might be perfect before their imperial audience. We are not told in what language their *English Mystery* was recited; but we are furnished with a curious fact, that "the Germans consider this play as the first introduction of that sort of dramatic performance in their country."—*Henry of Monmouth, by the Rev. J. E. Tyler*, ii. 61.

* The Spanish nation, unchangeable in their customs, have retained the last remains of the ancient Mysteries in the divisions of their dramas, called "Jornadas."

play, the whole life of a saint, from the cradle to martyrdom, was displayed in the same piece; the youth, the middle-age, and the caducity of the eminent personage required to be enacted by three different actors, so that there were the first, the second, and the third Jacob, to emulate one another, and provoke bickerings; town-folks when actors, it appears, being querulously jealous. Something of scenical illusion was contrived, and what in the style of the green-room is termed "properties*" was attempted, by the description we find in the directions to the actors, and by the mischances which occurred to the unpractised performers by their clumsy machinery. Their mode of representation was so much alike, that the same sort of ludicrous accidents have come down to us relative to our native mysteries, as occurred in those of France. Bishop Percy has quoted a malicious trick played by the Flemish Owl-glass, the buffoon of the times, among his neighbours in one of these mysteries†; a Judas had nearly hanged himself, and the cross had nearly

* "A sheep-skin for Jews, wigs for the Apostles, and vizards for devils," appear in the churchwardens' accounts at Tewkesbury, 1578, "for the players' geers."—*Hist. of Dramatic Poetry*, ii. 140. The same diligent inquirer has also discovered the theatrical term "properties," in allusion to the furniture of the stage, and which is so used by Shakespeare, employed in its present sense in an ancient morality.—*Ib.* ii. 279.

† Reliques of Ancient Poetry, i. 129.

realised a crucifixion. Among these unlucky attempts they gilded over the face to represent the Eternal Father; the ancient burgher, nearly suffocated, never appeared again; and next day it was announced that for the future the Deity should lie "covered by a cloud." A scaffold was built up of three or more divisions for "the stage-play:" Paradise opened at the top, the world moved in the centre, and the yawning throat of an immeasurable dragon, as the devils run in and out, showed the bottomless pit; and whenever the protruding wings of that infernal monster approached, "and fanned" the near spectators, the terror was real.

These mysteries abound with a licentiousness to which the rude simplicity of the age was innocently insensible; a ludicrous turn is often given to the solemn incidents of holy writ; and the legend of a saint opened an unbounded scope to their mother-wit. The usual remark of the people when they had been pleased with a performance was, "To-day the mystery was very fine and devout; and the devils played most pleasantly*." The devils were the buffoons, and compliment one another with the most atrocious titles. The spectators who shed tears at the torturous crucifixion, would listen

* *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française.*—The proverbial phrase is accompanied by a very superfluous remark—"Ce mot a passé d'usage avec les mœurs de ces temps anciens." See also *Dict. de Trevoux*, art. "*Mystère.*"

with delight to the volume of reciprocal abuse voided by Satan and the Satanic, whose very names, at any other time or place, would have paralysed the intellect. This strange mixture of religious and ludicrous emotions attests that the authors and the spectators were in the childhood of society, satisfied that they were good Christians. Such were the earliest attempts of our dramatic representations; but men must tread with naked feet before they put on the sock and buskin.

Several of these annual exhibitions in provincial towns have descended to us, as those of the Chester Whitsun-plays, and others in great towns. Originally, doubtless, written in Latin, they soon submitted to the Norman rule, vigilant to practise every means to diffuse the *French* language; but in this state they could not deeply delight the great body of the Saxon people*.

* That the translation of the "Chester Plays" was made from the *French*, and not from the *Latin*, as Warton supposed, is ingeniously elucidated by Mr. Collier. In the English translation, some of the original French passages have been preserved.—*Annals of the Stage*, ii. 129.

When Warton found that these plays were translated into English, he concluded that they were from the Latin. He totally forgot that the French was long the prevalent language of England. And this important circumstance, too often overlooked by preceding inquirers, has thrown much confusion in our literary history.

The best account we have of Ralph Higden may be found in the *first* volume of Lardner's Cyclopedia, on "The Early History of the English Stage," a work of some original research, at page 193.

The monk, Ralph Higden, under the influence of that national spirit which had been evinced by some former native monks, directed his efforts to the relief of his countrymen. Thrice he journeyed to Rome to obtain the permission of his holiness to translate these holy plays into the vernacular *English* for the people*. Three journeys to Rome indicate some difficulty about the propriety of this mode of edifying the populace, of which indeed there were conflicting opinions. But the time was favourable; the youthful monarch on the throne, our third Edward, was beginning to encourage the use of the vernacular idiom, and in 1338, Higden put forth mysteries in the native tongue, and thus accomplished what, in the great volume of the Polychronicon, he has so energetically exhorted, should be done, for the maintenance of what he termed "the birth-tongue."

The day could not fail to arrive in the gradations of the public intellect, even such as it then was, that society would feel the want of something more directly operating on their sympathies, or their daily experience, than the unvaried scriptural tale. Mysteries however devout, by such familiar repetition, would

* The earliest and rudest known miracle-play in English has been published by Mr. Halliwell—"The Harrowing of Hell." It was written in the reign of Edward the Second, and is a curious instance of the childhood of the drama.

lose something of their awfulness, as miracle-plays would satiate their tastes, as they became deficient in the freshness of invention. The first approaches of this change in their feelings are observable in the later miracle-plays, where, as a novel attraction to the old plays, abstract personations are partially introduced; but this novelty was to be carried much higher, and to include a whole set of new dramatic personages. A more intellectual faculty was now exercised in the plan of the MORALITY, or moral-play*. This was no inconsiderable advancement in the progress of society; it was deepening the recesses of the human understanding, awakening and separating the passions; it was one of those attempts which appear in the infancy of imagination, consisting not of human beings, but of their shadowy reflections, in the personification of their passions,—in a word, it was allegory! To relieve the gravity of this ethical play, which was in some danger of calling on the audience for deeper attention than their amusement could afford, the morality not only retained their old favourite, the Devil, but introduced a more natural buffoon in the Vice, who performed the part of the domestic fool of our ancestors, or the clown of our pantomine.

* The reign of Henry the Sixth may be fixed upon as the epoch of a new species of dramatic representation, known by the name of a moral.—*Collier*, i. 23.

These unsubstantial personages of allegory—these apparitions of human nature—were to assume a more bodily shape, when not only the passions, but the individual characters whom they agitated, were exhibited in every-day life, not however yet venturing into a wide field of society, but peeping from a corner,—it was nothing more than a single act, satirical and comic, in a dialogue sustained by three or four professional characters of the times. It was called the INTERLUDE, or "*a play between,*" to zest by its pleasantry the intervals of a luxurious, and sometimes a wearisome, banquet. The most dramatic interludes were the invention of JOHN HEYWOOD, the jester of Henry the Eighth. The Scottish Bard, Douglas, the Bishop of Dunkeld, alludes to these interludes, in his "Paleys of Honour."

"Grete was the preis the feast royál to sene,
At ease they eat, with INTERLUDES between *."

* The reader may gratify his curiosity, and derive considerable amusement, from the skilful analysis of primitive dramas, both manuscript and printed, which Mr. COLLIER has drawn up with true dramatic taste. There are also copious specimens in a curious article on Heywood in the volume on "the English Drama" of Lardner's Cyclopedia, — the labour of a learned antiquary. The progress of the drama was similar both in France and England, yet our vivacious neighbours seem to have invented a peculiar burlesque piece of their own, under the title of *Sotties*, and whose chief personage takes the quality of *Prince des Sots;* and *La Mère Sotte*, who is represented with her infant *Sots*. These pieces still retained their devout character, with an intermixture of profane and burlesque scenes, highly relished by the populace. "Ils le

Such was the march of events, the steppings which were conducting the national genius to the verge of tragedy and comedy; a vast interval of time and labour separates the writers of these primitive plays from the fathers of dramatic art; yet however ludicrous to us the simplicity of the age, often these singular productions betray shrewd humour and natural emotions. To condemn them as barbarous and absurd would be forming a very inadequate notion of the influence of these earliest of our European dramas on their contemporaries. An enlightened lover of the arts has said, perhaps with great truth, that Raphael never received from his age such flattering applause, and excited such universal approbation, as did Cimabué, the rude father of his art. The first essays strike more

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nommèrent par un quolibet vulgaire, *Jeux de Pois pilez*, et ce fut selon toutes les apparences à cause de mélange du sacré et du profane qui régnait dans ces sortes de jeux." The cant phrase which the people coined for this odd mixture of sacred and farcical subjects, of *Mashed Peas*, may lose its humour with us, but we find by Bayle, art. "D'Assoucy," that they were collected and printed under this title, and fetched high prices among collectors. These *Sotties* were acted by a brotherhood calling themselves, *Enfans sans Soucy.—Parfait Hist. du Théâtre Français*, i. 52. One of their chief composers was PIERRE GRINGOIRE, of whose rare *Sotties* I have several reprints by the learned Abbé Caron. Gringoire invented and performed his *Sotties*, in ridicule of the pope, on a scaffold or stage, to charm his royal master, Louis the Twelfth, in 1511; for an ample list of his gay satires see *Biog. Universelle*, art. "Gringoire."

deeply than even the masterpieces of a subsequent age after all its successful labour; for its more finished excellence depends partly on reflection, as well as on sensation.

The mystery and the morality lingered among us; but in the improved taste and literature of the court of Henry the Eighth, the facetious INTERLUDE, while it was facetious, won the royal smile. The successive agitations of the age, however, could not fail to reflect its tempers in these public exhibitions. In the reforming government of Edward the Sixth, the miracle-plays were looked on as Romish spectacles, and were fast sinking into neglect, when the clergy of the papistic queen retrograded into this whole fabulous mythology; adepts not only in the craft of miracles, but desirous, by these shows or "plays of miracles," to revive the taste in the imaginations of the people. The public authorities patronised what recently they had laughed at or had scorned. On Corpus Christi day, the Lord Mayor and the Privy Council were spectators of "The Passion of Christ," always an affecting drama; and it was again represented before this select audience: and on St. Olave's day, the truly "miracle-play" of that legendary saint was enacted in the church dedicated to the saint*.

The history of the INTERLUDE more particularly

* Strype's Mem. of Eccles. Hist., iii. 379.

marks an epoch, for it enters into our political history. Mysteries and moralities were purely religious or ethical themes, but the comic interludes took a more adventurous course; and their writers, accommodating themselves to the fashions of the day, were the organs of the prevalent factions then dividing the unquiet realm.

From the earliest moment of the projected reformation or emancipation from the Papal dominion by Henry, we discover the players of interludes at their insidious work; but affairs were floating in that uncertain state when the new had by no means displaced the old. In 1527, Henry the Eighth was greatly diverted at an interlude where the heretic Luther and his wife were brought on the stage, and the Reformers were ridiculed*. The king in the Creed and the ceremonies remained a Romanist; and in 1533, a proclamation inhibits "the playing of enterludes concerning doctrines now in question and controversy†." "The Defender of the Faith" was still irresolute to defend or to attack. In 1543, an act of parliament was passed for the control of dramatic representations; and at this later date, this reforming monarch decreed, that "no person should play in interludes any matter contrary to the doctrines of the Church of Rome!" Chronology

* Annals of the Stage, i. 107.

† Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poetry, iii. 428, 8vo.

in history is not only useful to date events, but to date the passions of sovereigns. It was absolutely necessary for Edward the Sixth on his ascension immediately to repeal this express act of parliament of his father*; and then the emancipated interluders now, openly, with grave logic or laughing ridicule, struck at all "the Roman superstitions." Hence we had Catholic and Protestant dramas. The Romanists had made very free strictures on Cromwell, Cranmer, and their followers; and on the side of the reformed we have no deficiency of oppugners of the Romish Church. Under Henry the Eighth, we have the sacred drama of "Every-man," a single personage, by whom the writer not unaptly personifies human nature. This drama came from the Romanists to recal the auditors back to the forsaken ceremonies and shaken creed of their fathers. Under Edward the Sixth, we have "Lusty Juventus," whom Satan and his old son Hypocrisy, with an extraordinary nomenclature of "holy things," would inveigle back to that seductive harlot, "Abominable Living," which the Reformer imagined was the favourite Dulcinea of "the false priests†." On the accession of Mary, this queen hastened a proclama-

* Rastell's Collection of Statutes, fo. 32—d.

† Both these ancient dramas are reprinted in Hawkins' "Origin of the English Drama." Many such dramas remain in manuscript.

tion against the interludes of the Reformers. The term used in the proclamation looks like an ironical allusion to a word which now had long been bandied on the lips of the populace. It specifies to be for "the *reformation* of busy meddlers in matters of religion." A strict watch was kept on the players, some of whom suffered for enacting a reformed interlude. Such plays seem to have been patronised in domestic secrecy. The interference of the Star-Chamber was called forth in 1556 for the total suppression of dramatic entertainments. In many places some magistrates had slackened their pursuit after "players," and reluctantly obeyed the public authorities. The first act of Elizabeth resembled in its character those of her brother Edward and her sister Mary, however opposite were the systems of their governments. The queen put a sudden stop to the enacting of all interludes which opposed the progress of the Reformation; there seemed to be no objection to any of a different cast; but Elizabeth lived to be an auditor of more passionate dramas than these theological logomachies performed on the stage, where the dull poet had sometimes quoted chapter and verse in Genesis or St. Matthew.

It is not generally known that, while these Catholic and Protestant dramas were opposed to each other in England, at the same period the Huguenots in France

had also entertained the derisory muse of the more comic interludes. There was, however, this difference in the fortunes of the writers; as in France the government had never reformed nor changed their position, there could have been no period which admitted of the public representation of these satirical dramas. In their dramatic history, it was long considered that the subjects of these Hugonistic dramas were too tender to bear the handling; and the brothers Parfait, in their copious "History of the French Theatre," only afford a slight indication of "the turbulent Calvinists," who had spread "pieces of dangerous heresy and fanaticism against the Pope, the cardinals, and the bishops; works which could not be noticed without profaning the page!"—and therefore they refrain from giving even their titles! It is in this spirit, and with such apologies, that historians have often castrated their own history. The existence of these dramas might have escaped our knowledge, had not the more enlightened judgment of the Duke de la Vallière supplied what the more stubborn Romanists had suppressed. This lover of literature has favoured the curious with the interesting analysis of two rare French Protestant plays, "*Le Marchand Converti*," in 1558; and "*Le Pape Malade et tirant à sa Fin*," in 1561. Allowing largely for the gross invec-

tives of the Calvinist—"*les impiétés*"—they display an original comic invention, and sparkle with the most lively sallies*. It is remarkable that "*Le Marchand Converti*," at such an early period of modern literature, is a regular comedy of five acts, introduced by a prologue in verse; odes are interspersed, and each act concludes with a chorus, whom the author calls "the company." The classical form of this unacted play, instinct with the spirit of the new reform, betrays the work of a learned hand.

* "Bibliothèque du Théâtre Français," iii. 263, ascribed to the Duke de la Vallière. He has preserved many passages exquisitely humorous. He felt awkwardly in performing his duty to his readers, after what his predecessors, Messieurs Parfait, had declared; —and, to calm the terrors of *les personnes scrupuleuses*, it is amusing to observe his plea, or his apology, for noticing these admirable anti-papistic satires:—"They are outrageous and abound with impieties; but they are extremely well written for their time, and truly comic. I considered that I could not avoid giving these extracts, were it only to show to what lengths the first pretended reformers carried their unreasonable violence against the holy Father, and the court of Rome." The apology for their transcription, if not more ingenuous, is at least more ingenious than the apology for their suppression.

THE REFORMER BISHOP BALE; AND THE ROMANIST JOHN HEYWOOD, THE COURT JESTER.

BALE, bishop of Ossory, and John HEYWOOD, the court jester, were contemporaries, and both equally shared in the mutable fortunes of the satiric dramas of their times; but they themselves were the antipodes of each other: the earnest Protestant BALE, the gravest reformer, and the inflexible Catholic, HEYWOOD, noted for "his mad merry wit," form one of those remarkable disparities which the history of literature sometimes offers.

BALE was originally educated in a monastery; he found an early patron, and professed the principles of the Reformation; and, like Luther, sealed his emancipation from Catholic celibacy by a wife, whom he tenderly describes as "his faithful Dorothea." It was a great thing for a monk to be mated with such constancy at a time when women were usually to be described as shrews, or worse. From the day of marriage the malice of persecution haunted the hapless heretic; such personal hatreds could not fail of being mutual. He seems to have too hastily anticipated the Reformation under Henry the Eighth, for though that

monarch had freed himself from "the bishop of Rome," he had by no means put aside the doctrines, and Bale, who had already begun a series of two-and-twenty reforming interludes in his "maternal idiom," found it advisable to leave a kingdom but half-reformed. He paused not, however, till he had written a whole library against "the Papelins," the last production always seemed the most envenomed. On the death of Henry he unexpectedly appeared before Edward the Sixth, who imagined that he had died. Bale had the misfortune to be promoted to the Irish bishopric of Ossory—to plant Protestantism in a land of Papistry! Frustrated in his unceasing fervour, Bale escaped from martyrdom by hiding himself in Dublin. The death of Edward relieved our Protestant bishop from this sad dilemma; for on the accession of Mary he flew into Switzerland. There he indulged his anti-papistical vein; the press sent forth a brood, among which might have been some of better growth, for he laboured on our British biography and literature; but as there were yet but few Protestants to record, it flowed, and sometimes overflowed, against all the friends of the Papacy; Pits, who subsequently resumed the task, a sullen and fierce Papist, in revenge omitted in the line of our illustrious Britons, Wickliffe and every Wickliffite. Such were the beginnings of our literary history. On the acces-

sion of Elizabeth, his country received back its exile; but Bale refused to be reinstated in his Irish see, and sunk into a quiet prebendary of Canterbury. Fuller has called our good bishop "Bilious Bale." Some conceive that this bishop has suffered ill-treatment, merely for having thrown out some remarkable, or abominable, invectives. Proselytes, however sincere in their new convictions and their old hatreds, both operating at once, colour their style as some do their faces, till by long use the heightened tint seems faint, and they go on deepening it, and thus at last the natural countenance is lost in the artificial mass.

If Bale were no poet, in the singular dramas we have, he at least displays a fluent invention; he tells plainly what is meant, which we like to learn; and I do not know whether it be owing to his generally indifferent verse, that we sometimes are struck by an idiomatic phrase, and a richness of rhymes peculiar to himself, which sustain our attention*.

Of John Heywood, the favourite jester of Henry the Eighth and his daughter Mary, and the intimate of Sir Thomas More, whose congenial humour may have

* One of these interludes has been recently given from "The Camden Society," under the skilful editorship of Mr. Collier, from a manuscript corrected by Bale himself in the Devonshire collection—"Kynge Johan." Others have been printed in the Harleian Collection, vol. i.; and in Dodsley's.

mingled with his own, more table-talk and promptness at reply have been handed down to us than of any writer of the times. His quips, and quirks, and quibbles, are of his age, but his copious pleasantry still enlivens; these smoothed the brow of Henry, and relaxed the rigid muscles of the melancholy Mary. He had the *entrée* at all times to the privy-chamber, and often to administer a strong dose of himself, which her majesty's physicians would prescribe. He is distinguished as Heywood the epigrammatist; a title fairly won by the man who has left six centuries of epigrams, collected and adjusted as many English proverbs in his verse, besides the quaint conceits of "crossing of proverbs*." Of these six hundred epigrams it is possible not a single one is epigrammatic: we have never had a Martial. Even when it became a fashion to write books of epigrams half a century subsequently, they usually closed in a miserable quibble, a dull apophthegm, or at the best, like those of Sir John Harrington, in a plain story rhymed. Wit, in our sense of the term, was long unpractised, and the modern epigram was not yet discovered.

Heywood, who had flourished under Henry, on the

* That is, proverbs with humorous answers to them. See the Bibliographical and Critical Catalogue, by Mr. Payne Collier, of Lord Francis Egerton's Library of Early English Literature, p. 2.

change in the reign of Edward, clung to the ancient customs. He was a Romanist, but had he not recovered in some degree from the cecity of superstition, he had not so keenly exposed, as he has done, some vulgar impostures. It happened, however, that some unlucky jest, trenching on treason, flew from the lips of the unguarded jester; it would have hanged some—but pleasant verses promptly addressed to the young sovereign saved him at the pinch,—however he gathered from "the council" that this was no jesting-time, and he left the country in the day that Bale was returning from his emigration under King Henry. On Mary's accession, Bale again retired, and Heywood suddenly appeared at court. Asked by the queen "What wind blew him there?" "Two specially; the one to see her majesty!" he replied. "We thank you for that," said the queen, "but I pray you what is the other?" "That your grace might see me!" There was shrewdness in this pleasantry, to bespeak the favour of his royal patroness. Four short years did not elapse ere Elizabeth opened her long reign, and then the merry Romanist for ever bid farewell to his native land, while Bale finally sat beside his English hearth. These were very moveable and removeable times, and no one was certain how long he should remain in his new locality.

The genius of HEYWOOD created "The Merrie Interlude;" unlike BALE, as in all things, he never opened the Bible for a stage-play, but approaching Comedy, he became the painter of manners, and the chronicler of domestic life. Warton certainly has hastily and contradictorily censured Heywood, without a right comprehension of his peculiar subjects; yet he admired at least one of Heywood's writings, in which, being anonymous, he did not recognise the victim of his vague statements. Warton and his followers have obscured a true genius for exuberant humour, keen irony, and exquisite ridicule, such as Rabelais and Swift would not have disdained, and have not always surpassed. One of his interludes is accessible for those who can revel in a novel scene of comic invention. This interlude is "The Four P's; the Palmer, the Pardoner, the Poticary, and the Pedler." Each flouts the other, and thus display their professional knaveries.*

The ludicrous strokes of this piece could never have come from a bigot to the ancient superstition, however attached to the ancient creed. We cannot tell how far the jester may have been influenced by a proclamation of 28th of Henry the Eighth, to protect "the poor innocent people from those light persons called par-

* Dodsley's "Old Plays," Vol. i.

doners by colour of their indulgences, &c." He has curiously exhibited to us all the trumpery regalia of papistry; as he also exposed "The Friery" in another interlude which has all the appearance of a merry tale from Boccaccio.

So plays the jocund spirit of Heywood the Jester, in his minstrel-verse and pristine idiom; but we have now to tell another tale. Heywood is the author of a ponderous volume, and an interminable "parable" of "The Spider and the Fly." It is said to have occupied the thoughts of the writer during twenty years. This unlucky "heir of his invention" is dressed out with a profusion of a hundred wood-cuts, then rare and precious things, among which starts up the full length of the author more than once. Warton impatiently never reached the conclusion, where the author has confided to us the secret of his incomprehensible intention. There Warton would have found that "we must understand that the spiders represent the Protestants, and the flies the Catholics; that the maid with the broom sweeping away the cobwebs (to the annoyance of their weavers) is Mary armed with the civil power, executing the commands of her Master (Christ), and her mistress (Mother Church)." We see at once all the embarrassments and barrenness of this wearying and perplexed fancy. Warton contents himself with what

he calls " a sensible criticism," taken from Harrison, a Protestant minister, and one of the partners of Holinshed's Chronicle; it is as mordacious as a periodical criticism. "Neither he who made this book, nor any who reads it, can reach unto the meaning." Warton, to confirm " the sensible criticism," alleges as a proof of its unpopularity that it was never reprinted; but it was published in 1556, and Mary died in 1558. A vindication of "the maid with the broom" might be equally unwelcome to " spiders and flies."

How it happened that the court jester who has sent forth such volumes of mirth could have kept for years hammering at a dull and dense poem, is a literary problem which perhaps admits of a solution. We may ascribe this aberration of genius to the author's position in society. Heywood was a Romanist from principle; that he was no bigot, his free satires on vulgar superstitions attest. But the jester at times was a thoughtful philosopher. One of his interludes is " The Play of the Weather," where the ways of Providence are vindicated in the distribution of the seasons. But " mad, merry Heywood " was the companion of many friends—Papists and Protestants—at court and in all the world over. His creed was almost whole in broken times, perhaps agreeing a little with the Protestant, and then reverting to the Romanist. In this unbalanced

condition, mingling the burlesque with the solemn, unwilling to excommunicate his friend the Protestant "spider," and intent to vindicate the Romanist "fly," often he laid aside and often resumed his confused emotions. It might require dates to settle the precise allusions; what he wrote under Henry and Edward would be of another colour than under the Marian rule. His gaiety and his gravity offuscate one another, and the readers of his longsome fiction, or his dark parallel, were puzzled, even among his contemporaries, to know in what sense to receive them. Sympathising with "the fly," and not uncourteous to "the spider," our author has shown the danger of combining the burlesque with the serious; and thus it happened that the most facetious genius could occupy twenty years in compounding, by fits and starts, a dull poem which neither party pretended rightly to understand.

ROGER ASCHAM.

It would, perhaps, have surprised Roger Ascham, the scholar of a learned age, and a Greek professor, that the history of English literature might open with his name; for in his English writings he had formed no premeditated work, designed for posterity as well as his own times. The subjects he has written on were solely suggested by the occasion, and incurred the slight of the cavillers of his day, who had not yet learned that humble titles may conceal performances which exceed their promise, and that trifles cease to be trivial in the workmanship of genius.

An apology for a favourite recreation, that of archery, for his indulgence in which his enemies, and sometimes his friends, reproached the truant of academic Greek; an account of the affairs of Germany while employed as secretary to the English embassy; and the posthumous treatise of "The Schoolmaster," originating in an accidental conversation at table, constitute the whole of the claims of Ascham to the rank of an English classic—a degree much higher than was attained to by the learning of Sir Thomas Elyot, and the genius of Sir Thomas More.

The mind of Ascham was stored with all the wealth of ancient literature the nation possessed. Ascham was proud, when alluding to his master the learned Cheke, and to his royal pupil Queen Elizabeth, of having been the pupil of the greatest scholar, and the preceptor to the greatest pupil in England; but we have rather to admire the intrepidity of his genius, which induced him to avow the noble design of setting an example of composing in our vernacular idiom. He tells us in his Toxophilus, "I write this English matter in the English language for Englishmen." He introduced an easy and natural style in English prose, instead of the pedantry of the unformed taste of his day; and adopted, as he tells us, the counsel of Aristotle, "to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do."

The study of Greek was the reigning pursuit in the days of Ascham. At the dispersion of the Greeks on the loss of Constantinople, the learned emigrants brought with them into Europe their great originals; and the subsequent discovery of printing spread their editions. The study of Greek, on its first appearance in Europe, alarmed the Latin church, and was long deemed a dangerous and heretical innovation. The cultivation of this language was, however, carried on with enthusiasm, and a controversy was kindled, even in this country, respecting the ancient pronunciation. A passion for

Hellenistic lore pervaded the higher classes of society. There are fashions in the literary world as sudden and as capricious as those of another kind; and which, when they have rolled away, excite a smile, although possibly we have only adopted another of fresher novelty. The Greek mania raged. Ascham informs us, that his royal pupil Elizabeth understood Greek better than the canons of Windsor; and doubtless, while the queen was translating Isocrates, the ladies-in-waiting were parsing. Lady Jane Grey studying Plato, was hardly an uncommon accident; but the touching detail which she gave to Ascham of her domestic persecution, on trivial forms of domestic life, which had induced her to fly for refuge to her Greek, has thrown a deep interest on that well-known incident. All educated persons then studied Greek; when Ascham was secretary to our ambassador at the court of Charles the Fifth, five days in the week were occupied by the ambassador reading with the secretary the Greek tragedians, commenting on Herodotus, and reciting the Orations of Demosthenes. But this rage was too capricious to last, and too useless to be profitable; for neither the national taste nor the English language derived any permanent advantage from this exclusive devotion to Greek, and the fashion became lost in other studies.

It was a bold decision in a collegiate professor, who

looked for his fame from his lectures on Greek, to venture on modelling his native idiom, with a purity and simplicity to which it was yet strange. Ascham, indeed, was fain to apologise for having written in English, and offered the king, Henry the Eighth, to make a Greek or a Latin version of his "Toxophilus," if his Grace chose. "To have written in another tongue had been both more profitable for my study, and also more honest [honourable] for my name; yet I can think my labour well bestowed, if, with a little hindrance of my profit and name, may come any furtherance to the pleasure or commodity of *the gentlemen and yeomen of England.* As for the Latin and Greek tongue, everything is so excellently done in them that none can do better; *in the English tongue,* contrary, *everything in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse.*"

Such were the first difficulties which the fathers of our native literature had to overcome. Sir Thomas Elyot endured the sneer of the cavillers, for his attempt to inlay our unpolished English with Latin terms; and Roger Ascham, we see, found it necessary to apologise for at all adopting the national idiom. Since that day neologisms have fertilised the barrenness of our Saxon, and the finest geniuses in Europe have abandoned the language of Cicero, to transfuse its grace into an idiom

whose penury was deemed too rude for the pen of the scholar. Ascham followed his happier genius, and his name has created an epoch in the literature of England.

A residence of three years in Germany in the station of confidential secretary of our ambassador to the emperor Charles the Fifth, placed him in a more extensive field of observation, and brought him in contact with some of the most remarkable men of his times. It is much to be regretted, that the diary he kept has never been recovered. That Ascham was inquisitive, and, moreover, a profound observer at an interesting crisis in modern history, and that he held a constant intercourse with great characters, and obtained much secret history both of persons and of transactions, fully appears in his admirable "Report of the Affairs and State of Germany, and the Emperor Charles' Court." This "Report" was but a chance communication to a friend, though it is composed with great care. Ascham has developed with a firm and masterly hand the complicated intrigues of the various powers, when Charles the Fifth seemed to give laws to Germany and Italy. This emperor was in peace with all the world in 1550, and in less than two years after, he was compelled to fly from Germany, surrounded by secret enemies. Ascham has traced the discontents of the minor courts of Italian dukes, and German princes, who gradually deserted the haughty

autocrat—an event which finally led to the emperor's resignation. It is a moral tale of princes openly countenancing quietness, and "privily brewing debate"—a deep catastrophe for the study of the political student. Ascham has explained the double game of the court of Rome, under the ambitious and restless Julius the Third, who playing the emperor against the French monarch, and the French monarch against the emperor, worked himself into that intricate net of general misery, spun out of his own crafty ambidexterity. This precious fragment of secret history might have offered new views and many strokes of character to the modern historian, Robertson, who seems never to have discovered this authentic document; yet it lay at hand. So little even in Robertson's day did English literature, in its obscurer sources, enter into the pursuits of our greatest writers.

Ascham's first work was the "Toxophilus, the Schole, or Partitions of Shootinge." At this time, fire-arms were so little known, that the term "shooting" was solely confined to the bow, then the redoubtable weapon of our hardy countrymen. In this well-known treatise on archery, he did what several literary characters have so well done, apologised for his amusement in a manner that evinced the scholar had not forgotten himself in the archer.

It affords some consolation to authors, who often suffer from neglect, to observe the triumph of an excellent book. Its first appearance procured him a pension from Henry the Eighth, which enabled him to set off on his travels. Subsequently, in the reign of Mary, when that eventful change happened in religion and in politics, adverse to Ascham, our author was cast into despair, and hastened to hide himself in safe obscurity. It was then that this excellent book, and a better at that time did not exist in the language, once more recommended its author; for Gardiner, the papal bishop of Winchester, detected no heresy in the volume, and by his means, the Lords of the Council approving of it, the author was fully reinstated in royal favour. Thus Ascham twice owed his good fortune to his good book.

"The Schoolmaster," with its humble title, "to teach children to understand, write, and speak the Latin tongue," conveys an erroneous notion of the delight, or the knowledge which may be drawn from this treatise, notwithstanding that the work remains incomplete, for there are references to parts which do not appear in the work itself. "The Scholemaster" is a classical production in English, which may be placed by the side of its great Latin rivals, the Orator of Cicero, and the Institutes of Quintilian. It is enlivened by interesting details. The first idea of the work was started in a

real conversation at table, among some eminent personages, on occasion of the flight of some scholars from Eton College, driven away by the iron rod of the master. "Was the schoolhouse to be a house of bondage and fear, or a house of play and pleasure?" During the progress of the work the author lost his patron, and incurred other disappointments; he has consigned all his variable emotions to his volume. The accidental interview with Lady Jane Grey; his readings with Queen Elizabeth in their daily intercourse with the fine writers of antiquity, and their recreations at the regal game of chess—for such was the seduction of Attic learning, that the queen on the throne felt a happiness in again becoming the pupil of her old master; these, and similar incidents, present those individual touches of the writer, which give such a reality to an author's feelings*.

* There were five editions of "The Scholemaster" within twenty years of its first publication, of which that of 1573 is the most correct and rare.—*Dr. Valpy's Cat.* It is curious, in tracking the progress of an author's fame, to suspect that Ascham may owe his, in modern days, to the title of this work; for it was a learned schoolmaster who revived the name of Ascham by publishing an edition of "The Schoolmaster" in 1711, with notes, which was reprinted in 1743. His entire works were collected in 1761 by James Bennett, also a schoolmaster, with a life by Dr. Johnson. There has been a more recent edition, in 1815. "The Toxophilus," the Manual of Archery, has been often reprinted since the taste for that amusement has revived among us.

It is to be regretted that Ascham held but an indolent pen. Yet it were hard to censure the man for a cold neglect of his fame, who seems equally to have neglected his fortune. Ascham has written little; and all he left his family was "this little book," (the Schoolmaster,) and which he bequeathed to them, as the right way to good learning, "which, if they follow, they shall very well come to sufficiency of living." This was an age when the ingenious clung to a patron; the widow and the son of Ascham found the benefits of this testamentary recommendation. It must, however, be confessed to have been but a capricious legacy, for no administrator might have been found to "the will." The age of patronage was never that of independence to an author.

Johnson, in his admirable Life of Ascham, observed, that "his disposition was kind and social; he delighted in the pleasure of conversation, and was probably not much inclined to business." It is certain that he preferred old books to pounds sterling, for once he requested to commute a part of his pension for a copy of the Decem Rhetores Græci, which he could not purchase at Cambridge. His frequent allusions in his letters when abroad to "Mine Hostess Barnes," who kept a tavern at Cambridge in the reign of Edward the Sixth, with tender reminiscences of her "fat capons,"

and "the good-fellowship" there; and further, his sympathy at the deep potation, when standing hard by the emperor at his table, he tells us, "the emperor drank the best I ever saw,—he had his head in the glass five times as long as any of us, and never drank less than a good quart at once of Rhenish wine," and his determination of providing "every year a little vessel of Rhenish" for his cronies; and still further, his haunting the cockpit, and sometimes trusting fortune by her dice, notwithstanding that he describes "dicing" as "the green pathway of hell;" all these *traits* mark the boon companion loving his leisure and his lounge.

When engaged in public life, a collegiate fellowship appeared to him to offer supreme felicity. He writes thus,—"Ascham to his friends: who is able to maintain his life at Cambridge, knows not what a felicity he hath." Such was the conviction of one who had long lived in courts.

But when we consider that Ascham was Latin secretary to Edward the Sixth, to Mary, and to Elizabeth, and intimately acquainted with the transactions of these cabinets, with the sovereigns, and the ministers; and during three years, held a personal intercourse with the highest foreign court;—we must regret, if we do not censure, that the man who, possessing these rare advan-

tages, with a vigorous intellect, and a felicitous genius, has left the world in silence. Assuredly, in Ascham, we have lost an English Comines, who would have rivalled our few memoir-writers, who, though with pens more industrious, had not eyes more observant, nor heads more penetrating, than this secretary of three sovereigns.

There is, however, reason to conclude, that he himself was not insensible to these higher claims which his station might have urged on his genius and his diligence. Every night during his residence abroad, which was of no short period, he was occupied by filling his Diary, which has not, in any shape, come down to us. He has also himself told, that he had written a book on "The Cockpit," one of the recreations of "a courtly gentleman." We cannot imagine that such writings, by the hand of Ascham, would be destroyed by his family, who knew to value them. A modern critic, indeed, considers it fortunate for Ascham's credit, that this work on "The Cockpit" has escaped from publication. The criticism is fallacious, for if an apology for cockfighting be odious, the author's reputation is equally hurt by the announcement as by the performance. But the truth is, that such barbarous sports, like the bear-baiting of England and the bull-fights of Spain, have had their advocates. Queen

Elizabeth had appointed Ascham her bear-keeper; and he was writing in his character when disclosing the mysteries of the cockpit. But the genius of our author was always superior to his subject; and this was a treatise wherein he designed to describe "all kinds of pastimes joined with labour used in open place, and in the day-light." The curious antiquary, at least, must regret the loss of Ascham's "Cockpit."

Ascham lived in the ferment of the Reformation: zealously attached to the new faith under Edward the Sixth and Elizabeth, how did he preserve himself during the intermediate reign, when he partook of the favours of the papistical sovereign? His master and friend, the learned Sir John Cheke, had only left for himself the choice of a recantation, or a warrant for execution; but of Ascham's good fortune, nothing is known but its mystery. The novel religion had, however, early heated the passions, and narrowed the judgment, of Ascham. He wrote at a period when the Romanist and the Protestant reciprocally blackened each other. Ascham not only abhorred all Italians as papists, but all Italian books as papistical. He invokes the interposition of the civil magistrate against Petrarch and Boccaccio, whose volumes were then selling in every shop. Baretti strikes at his manes with his stiletto-

pen, in an animated passage * ; and Warton is indignant at his denunciation of our ancient romances, of which the historian of our poetry says, " he has written in the spirit of an early Calvinistic preacher, rather than as a sensible critic and a polite scholar "—he who, in his sober senses, was eminently both.

. We may lament that the first steps in every revolution are taken in darkness, and that the reaction of opinions and prejudices is itself accompanied by errors and prejudices of its own. The bigotry of the new faith was not inferior to the old. The reforming Archbishop Grindal substituted the dull and barbarous Palingenius, Sedulius, and Prudentius, for the great classical authors of antiquity. The Reformation opened with fanaticism ; and men were reformers before they were philosophers. Had Ascham, a learned scholar, and a man of fine genius, been blessed with the prescient eye of philosophy, he had perceived that there was not more papistry in the solemn " Trionfi " of Petrarch, and not less " honest pastime " in a " merrie tale " of Boccaccio, than in cock-fighting and dicing, and that with these works the imagination of the public was gradually stepping out of a supernatural world of folio legends, into a world of true nature, which led to that

* Baretti's " Account of the Manners of Italy," ii. 137—the most curious work of this Anglo-Italian.

unrivalled era which immortalised the closing century.

We must recollect that the bigotry of the Reformation, or that which afterwards assumed the form of puritanism, in their absurd notion of the nature of idolatry attached to every picture and every statue on sacred subjects, eventually banished the fine arts from England for a long century, and retarded their progress even to our own days. A curious dialogue has been preserved by Strype, whose interlocutors are Queen Elizabeth and a Dean. The Dean having obtained some of those fine German paintings, those book-miniatures which are of the most exquisite finish, placed them in her majesty's prayer-book. For this the queen proscribed the dean, as she did those beautiful illuminations, as "Romish and idolatrous;" and with a Gothic barbarism, strange in a person with her Attic taste, commanded the clergy "to wash all pictures out of their walls." To this circumstance the painter Barry ascribes the backward state of the fine arts, which so long made us a by-word among the nations of Europe, and even induced the critical historian of the arts, Winkelman, to imagine, that the climate of England presented an eternal obstruction to the progress of art itself; it was too long supposed that no Englishman could ever aspire to be an artist of genius.

The same principle which urged Ascham to denounce all Italian books, instigated his royal pupil "to wash out all pictures," and even so late as the reign of George the Third, when the artists of England made a noble offer, gratuitously to decorate our churches with productions of their own composition, the Bishop of London forbade the glorious attempt to redeem English art from the anathema of foreign critics.

Ascham, whose constitutional delicacy often impeded his studies, died prematurely. The parsimonious queen emphatically rated his value by declaring, that she would rather have lost ten thousand pounds—no part of which, during his life, the careless yet not the neglected Ascham ever shared.

Roger Ascham was truly what Pope has described Gay to have been, "in wit a man, simplicity a child;" and he has developed his own character in his letters. Latin and English, they are among the earliest specimens of that domestic and literary correspondence in which the writer paints himself without reserve, with all the warm touches of a free pencil, gay sallies of the moment, or sorrows of the hour, confiding to the bosom of a friend the secrets of his heart and his condition; such as we have found in the letters of Gray and of Shenstone.

The works of Ascham, which are collected in a single volume, remain for the gratification of those who preserve a pure taste for the pristine simplicity of our ancient writers. His native English, that English which we have lost, but which we are ever delighted to recover, after near three centuries, is still critical without pedantry, and beautiful without ornament: and, which cannot be said of the writings of Sir THOMAS ELYOT and Sir THOMAS MORE, the volume of ASCHAM is indispensable in every English library, whose possessor in any way aspires to connect together the progress of taste and of opinion in the history of our country.

PUBLIC OPINION.

How long has existed that numerous voice which we designate as "Public Opinion;" which I shall neither define nor describe?

The history of the English "people," considered in their political capacity, cannot be held to be of ancient date. The civil wars of England, and the intestine discords of the bloody Roses, seem to have nearly reduced the nation to a semi-barbarous condition; disputed successions, cruel factions, and family feuds, had long convulsed the land, and the political disorganisation had been as eventful as were, not long after, the religious dissensions.

The grandfather of Elizabeth, Henry the Seventh, had terminated a political crisis. It was his policy to weaken the personal influence of the higher nobility, whose domination our monarchs had often fatally experienced. This seems to have been the sole "public" concern of this prudential and passionless sovereign, who, as the authority of the potent aristocracy declined, established that despotic regality which remained as the inheritance of the dynasty of the Tudors.

In the days of the queen's father all "public interests" were concentrated in the court-circle and its dependencies. The Parliament was but the formal echo of the voice which came from the cabinet. The learned Spelman has recorded that when the lower house hesitated to pass the bill for the dissolution of the monasteries, they were summoned into the king's presence; and the Commons being first kept in waiting some hours in his gallery, the king entered, looking angrily on one side and then on the other: the dark scowl of the magnificent despot announced his thoughts; and they listened to the thunder of his voice. "I hear," said he, "that my bill will not pass, but I will have it pass, or I will have some of your heads*." I do not recollect whether it was on this occasion that his majesty saluted his faithful Commons as "brutes!" but the burly tyrant treated them as such. The penalty of their debates was to be their heads; therefore, this important bill passed *nemine contradicente!*

However contemptuously this monarch regarded those who were within his circle, he was sufficiently enlightened in the great national revolution he meditated to desire to gain over the multitude on his side. The very circumstance of the king allowing, as the letters patent run, "the free and liberal use of the

* Spelman's History of Sacrilege.

Bible in *our own natural English tongue,*" was a *coup d'état,* and an evidence that Henry at one time designed to create a people of readers on whom he counted to side with him. The people were already possessed of the Reformation, before Henry the Eighth had renounced the papacy. The reformers abroad had diligently supplied them with versions of the Scriptures, and no small numbers of pamphlets printed abroad in English were dispersed among the early "gospellers," the expressive distinction of the new heretics; a humble but fervent rabble of tailors, joiners, weavers, and other handicraftsmen, who left "the new for the old God," ready martyrs against the gross papistical impostures, and many females theological, who turned away from the corporal presence, and whom no bishop could seduce to curtsey to a saint.

The new concession made to this people was indeed received with enthusiasm. All flocked to read, or to be read to. Never were the Scriptures so artlessly scrutinised; they furnished whole scenes for interludes, and were tagged with rhymes for ballads; even the grave judges, before they delivered their charges, prefaced them by a text. Each reader became an expounder, and new schismatics were busied with new heresies. The king had not calculated on this result; and when he found the nation abounded not with readers so much

as with disputants—that controversies raged where uniformity was expected—Henry became so irritated at the universal distraction of opinion, that his first attempt to raise a public voice ended, as has been since often attempted, in its suppression. The permission to read the sacred volume was contracted by the most qualifying clauses. The noble and the gentry might read it "alone in their garden or orchard, or other retired places," but men and women in the lower ranks were absolutely forbidden to read it, or to have it read to them*.

The clashing polemics of the brother and the sister of Elizabeth did not advance the progress of civil society. The novelists, if we may so term these lovers of novelty, flushed with innovation, were raging with every rapid change, while the ancients, in spite and in despondence, sullenly clung to the old, which they held could never be the obsolete. The first movements of the great reform seemed only to have transferred the late civil wars which had distracted the land, to the minds of the people in a civil war of opinions.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne, there was yet no recognised "public" in the commonwealth; the people were mere fractional and incoherent parts of society. This heroic queen, whose position and whose masculine

* 34 Henry VIII.

character bear some affinity to those of the great Catharine of Russia, had to create "a people" subservient to the very design of advancing the regal authority in its ascendancy. The policy of the maiden queen was that of her ancestors; but the same jealousy of the aristocracy turned her genius to a new source of influence, unknown to her progenitors, and which her successors afterwards hardly recognised. In the awful mutations through which society had been passing, some had been silently favourable to the queen's views. The population had considerably risen since the reign of Henry the Seventh*. Property had changed hands, and taken new directions; and independent classes in society were rising fast.

The great barons formerly had kept open houses for all comers and goers; five hundred or a thousand "blue coats" in a single family crowded their castles or their mansions; these were "trencher slaves" and "swash-bucklers;" besides those numerous "retainers" of great lords, who, neither menial nor of the household, yet yielded their services on special occasions, for the privilege of shielding their own insolence under the ostentatious silver "badge," or the family arms, which none might strike with impunity, and escape from the hostility of the whole noble family. In the opening

* Hallam's Constitution of England, i. 8, 4to.

scene of Romeo and Juliet our national bard has perpetuated the insolence of the wearers with all the reality of nature and correctness of custom. Such troops of idling partisans were only reflecting among themselves the feuds and the pride of their rival masters; shadows of the late civil wars which still lingered in the land*.

The first blow at the independent grandeur of the nobles had been struck by the grandfather of the queen; the second was the consequence of the acts of her father. The new proprietors of the recently-acquired abbey-lands, and other monastic property, were not only courtiers, but their humbler dependents; many of them the commissioners who had undervalued all these manors and lordships, that they might get such "Robin Hood's penny-worths" more easily by the novelty of "begging" for them. These formed a new body of proprietors, who gradually constituted *a new gentry*, standing between the nobles and the commonalty; and from the nature of their property they became land-jobbers, letting and underletting, raising rents, enhancing the prices of commodities, inclosing the common lands, and swallowing up the small farms by large ones.

* The remains of this feudal pomp and power were visible even at a later period in the succeeding reign, when we find the Earl of Nottingham, in his embassy to Spain, accompanied by a retinue of five hundred persons, and the Earl of Hertford, at Brussels, carried three hundred gentlemen.

There arose in consequence a great change in agricultural pursuits, no longer practised to acquire a miserable subsistence; the land was changed into a new mine of wealth; and among the wealthiest classes of English subjects were the graziers, who indeed became the founders of many families*.

The nobles found their revenues declining, as an excess of expenditure surprised them; this changeable state only raised their murmurs, for they seemed insensible to the cause. Their ancient opulence was secretly consuming itself; their troops of domestics were thinned in numbers; and a thousand families disappeared, who once seemed to have sprung out of the soil, where whole generations had flourished through the wide domains of the lord. A great change had visibly occurred in the baronial halls. The octogenarians in Elizabeth's later days complained that the country was depopulating fast; and the chimneys of the great mansions which had smoked the year round, now scarcely announced "a merry Christmas."

A transition from one state of society to another will always be looked on suspiciously by those who may deem the results problematical; but it will be eagerly

* "The graziers have assured me of their credit, and some of them may be trusted for a hundred thousand pounds."—Sir J. Harrington's *Prologue to* "*The Metamorphosis of Ajax.*"

opposed by those who find the innovation unfavourable to themselves. The results of the new direction of landed property, incomprehensible to the nobles, were abhorrent to the feelings of the people. Among "the people," that is the populace, there still survived tender reminiscences of the warmth of the abbots' kitchens; and many a wayfaring guest could tell how erst by ringing at the monastic gate the wants of life had been alleviated. The monks too had been excellent landlords living amid their tenants; and while the husbandmen stood at easy rents, the public markets were regularly maintained by a constant demand. In the breaking up of the monasteries many thousands of persons had been dispersed; and it would seem that among that sturdy community of vagabonds which now rose over the land, some low Latin words in their "pedlar's French," as the canting language they devised is called, indicate their origin from the familiar dialect of the ejected poor scholars of the late monastic institutions.

The commotions which rose in all parts of the country during the brief reign of Edward the Sixth were instigated by the ancient owners of these lands, who conceived that they had been disinherited by the spoliators; thus weakly they avenged their irrecoverable losses; nor did such leaders want for popular pretences

among a discontented populace, who, as they imagined, were themselves sufferers in the common cause. We are informed, on the indubitable authority of the diary of the youthful Edward, that "*the* PEOPLE had conceived a wonderful hatred against GENTLEMEN whom they held as *their enemies.*" The king seems distinctly to distinguish the gentry from the nobility.

In the decline of the great households a result however occurred, which tended greatly to improve the independent condition of "the people." The manual arts had been practised from generation to generation, the son succeeding the father in the wide domains of some noble; but when the great lords were contracting the scale of their establishments, and failed to furnish occupation to these dependents, the mechanics and artificers took refuge in the towns; there localised, they were taught to reap the fruits of their own daily industry; and as their labour became more highly appreciated, and the arts of commerce were more closely pursued, they considerably heightened the cost of those objects of necessity or pleasure which supplied the wants or the luxuries of the noble. In becoming citizens, they ceased to be mere domestics in the great households; a separate independence was raised between the lord and his mechanic; the humble class lost something in leaving the happy carelessness of life, for

a condition more anxious and precarious; but the influence of the noble was no longer that of the lord paramount, but simply the influence of the customer over the tradesman; "an influence," as Hume shrewdly remarks, "which can never be dangerous to civil government."

We now distinctly perceive new classes in civil society rising out of the decline of the preponderating power of the great barons, and of the new disposition of landed property; the gentry, the flourishing agriculturist, and those mechanics and artificers who carried on their trades, independently of their former lordly patrons: we now, therefore, discern the first elements of popularity.

There was now "a people," who might be worthy of entering into the views of the statesman; but it was a divided people. Among them, the Queen knew, lay concealed her domestic enemies; a more novel religion than the new was on the watch to shake her established church; and no inconsiderable portion of her subjects in their papal consciences were traitors. The arts of juncture, or the keeping together parts broken and separated, making hearts compliant which were stubbornly opposed to each other, demanded at once the firmness and the indulgence of the wisest policy; and such was the administration of Elizabeth. A reign of

continued struggle, which extended to nearly half a century, was a probationary period for royalty; and a precarious throne, while it naturally approximated the sovereign to the people, also taught the nation its own capacities, by maintaining their monarch's glory amid her external and internal enemies.

The nobility was to feel the weight of the royal prerogative; no noble families were permitted to intermarry, and no peer could leave the kingdom, without the license of the Queen. But at the very time she was ruling them with a potent hand, Elizabeth courted the eyes and the hearts of "the people;" she sought every occasion to exhibit her person in processions and progresses, and by her speech and manner shed her graciousness on the humblest of her subjects. Not slow to perceive their wants and wishes, she it was who first gave the people a theatre, as her royal style expressed it, "for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure;" and this at a time when her council were divided in their opinion.

Participating in the inmost feelings of the people, she commanded that the awful tomes of Fox's "Acts and Monuments," a book written, as the author has himself expressed it, for "the simple people," should be chained to the desk of every church and common hall. In this Book of Martyrs, gathered from all

quarters, and chronicling the obscurest individuals, many a reader, kindling over the lengthened page, dwelt on his own domestic tale in the volume of the nation. These massy volumes were placed easy of access for perpetual reference, and doubtless their earnest spirit multiplied Protestants.

No object which concerned the prosperity of the people but the Queen identified herself with it; she saluted Sir Thomas Gresham as her "royal merchant," and opening with her presence his Exchange, she called it Royal. It is a curious evidence of her system to win over the people's loyalty, that she suggested to Sir Thomas Wilson to transfuse the eloquence of Demosthenes into the language of the people, to prepare them by such solemn admonitions against the machinations of her most dreaded enemy. Our translator reveals the design by his title: "*The Three* Orations of Demosthenes, with those his fower Orations titled expressly and by name against King Philip of Macedonie, most needful to be redde in these dangerous dayes, of all them that love their countrie's libertie*." The Queen considered the aptness of their application, and the singular felicity of transferring the inordinate ambition of

* Imprinted at London by Henrie Denham, quarto, without date; but the dedication to Sir William Cecil is dated 1570; nearly twenty years after Sir Thomas Wilson's first publications "On Logic," and "On Rhetoric."

Philip of Macedon to Philip of Spain. To these famous "philippics" was prefixed the solemn oath that the young men of Greece took to defend their country against the royal invader, "at this time right needful for all Christians, not only for Englishmen, to observe and follow."

It was not until eighteen years after that the Armada sailed from the shores of Spain, and this translation perpetuates an instance of political foresight.

The genius of Elizabeth created her age; surrounding herself by no puny favourites of an hour, in the circle of her royalty were seen the most laborious statesmen our annals record, and a generation of romantic commanders; the secretaries of state were eminently learned; and the queen was all these herself, in her tried prudence, her dauntless intrepidity, and her lettered accomplishments. The energies of the sovereign reached the people, and were responded to; the spirit-stirring events rose with the times; it was a reign of enterprise and emulation, a new era of adventure and glory. The heroes of England won many a day's battle in the Netherlands, in France, in Spain, and in Portugal; and the ships of England unfurled their flags in unknown seas, and left the glory of the maiden queen in new lands.

It would be no slight volume which should contain

the illustrious names of a race of romantic adventurers, who lost their sleep to gain new trophies in a campaign, to settle a remote colony, or to give a name to a new continent. All ranks in society felt the impulse of the same electrical stroke, and even the cupidity of the mere trader was elevated into heroism, and gained a patent of heraldry *. The spirits of that age seemed busied with day-dreams, of discovering a new people, or founding a new kingdom. Shakespeare alludes to this passion of the times:

> "Some to the wars, to try their fortune there;
> Some to discover islands far away."

If our Drake was considered by the Spaniard as the most terrible of pirates, in England he was admired as another Columbus. The moral feeling may sometimes be more justly regulated by the degree of latitude. The Norrises, the Veres, the Grenvilles, the Cavendishes, the Earl of Cumberland, and the Sidneys, bear a lustre in their characters which romance has not surpassed; and many there were as resolutely ambitious as Sir John Davies, who has left his name to the Straits still

* In Sylvanus Morgan's "Sphere of Gentry," lib. iii. c. 9, is one of these patents of heraldry, granted to William Tollerson, a merchant of London, that his honours may be fitly conveyed to his offspring. He had fought and conquered in Africa—destroyed a small navy of "the Portugals," with whom he made attempt to league; and bore for his crest a demi-negro, in proper colour, prepared to the conflict, with dart and pavice, gold—and a ship, sable, with all its equipage.

bearing it. Sir Henry Sidney, the father of Sir Philip, who became a distinguished statesman, had once designed to raise a new kingdom in America; and his romantic son resumed this design of founding an empire for the Sidneys. The project was secretly planned between our puerile hero and the adventurous Drake, and was only frustrated by the queen's arrest of her hero at Plymouth. Of the same batch of kingdom-founders was Sir Walter Rawleigh; he baptised with the spirit of loyalty his "Virginia." Muscovy, at that stirring period, was a dominion as strange as America and the Indies; during the extraordinary events of this period, when Elizabeth had obtained a monopoly of the trade of that country, the czar proposed to marry an English lady; a British alliance, both personal and political, he imagined, should his subjects revolt, might secure an asylum in the land of his adoption. The daughter of the Earl of Huntington was actually selected by the queen to be the czarina; but her ladyship was so terrified at the Muscovite and his icy region, that she lost the honour of being a romantic empress, and the civiliser of all the Russias. Thus, wherever the winds blew, the name of Elizabeth was spread; "the great globe itself" seemed to be our "inheritance," and seemed not too vast a space to busy the imaginations of the people.

This was the time of first beginnings in the art of guiding public opinion. Ample volumes, like those of Fox, powerful organs of the feelings of the people, were given to them. The Chronicles of Hall and Holinshed opened for them the glory of the love of their fatherland. It was the genius of this active age of exploits which inspired RICHARD HAKLUYT to form one of the most remarkable collections in any language, yet it was solely to be furnished from our own records, and the mighty actors in the face of the universe were solely to be Englishmen. Now appeared the three tomes of "*The principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries, made by the English Nation;*" northward, southward, and westward, and at last, "the new-found world of America;" a world, with both Indies, discovered within their own century!—these amazed and delighted all classes of society. The legendary voyages of the monkish chroniclers, their maritime expeditions, opening with the fabulous Arthur, hardly exceeded the simplicity of our first discoverers. Many a hero had led on the adventurers; but their secretaries and historians were often themselves too astonished at what they witnessed, and stayed too short a time, to recover their better judgment in new places, and among new races of men. Sanctioned by many noble and genuine adventures, not less authen-

tic appeared their terrors and their wonder; in polar icebergs, or before that island which no ship could approach, wherein devils dwelt; or among the sunny isles of Greece, and the burning regions of Ormus and Malacca, and the far realms of Cambaya and Cathay; in Ethiopia and in Muscovy, in Persia and in Peru; on the dark coast of Guinea, and beyond in Africa; and in Virginia, with her feathered chiefs; with many a tale of Tripoli and Algiers, where Britons were found in chains, till the sovereign of England demanded their restitution, and of the Holy Land, where the peaceful crusaders now only knelt in pilgrimage. All this convinced them that the world was everywhere inhabited; and that all was veracious, as Sebastian Cabot, the true rival of Columbus, and perhaps our countryman, had marked in his laborious maps, which he had engraved, and which were often wondered at, as they hung in the Privy Gallery at Westminster. Alas! for the readers of modern travels, who can no longer participate in the wild and awful sensations of the all-believing faith of "the home-bred wit" of the Elizabethan era—the first readers of HAKLUYT'S immense collection.

The advancement of general society out of its first exclusive circles became apparent when "the public" themselves were gradually forming a component part of the empire.

"The new learning," as the free discussions of opinions and the popular literature of the day were distinguished, widely spread. Society was no longer scattered in distant insulations. Their observation was more extended, their thought was more grave; tastes multiplied, and finer sympathies awakened. "The theatre" and "the ordinary" first rose in this early stage of our civilisation; and the ceaseless publications of the day, in the current form of pamphlets, were snatched up, even in the intervening pauses of theatrical representation, or were commented on by some caustic oracle at the ordinary, or in Powles' walk. We were now at the crisis of that great moral revolution in the intellectual history of a people, when the people become readers, and the people become writers. In the closer intercourse with their neighbours, their insulated homeliness was giving way to more exotic manners; they seemed to imitate every nation while they were incurring the raillery or the causticity of our satirists, who are not usually the profoundest philosophers. The satirists are the earliest recorders of manners, but, fugitive historians of fugitive objects, they only sport on the surface of things. The progressive expansion of social life, through its homeliest transitions, are more clearly discerned in the perspective view; for those who are occupied by opening their narrow ways, and by

lengthening their streets, do not contemplate on the architectural city which is reserved for posterity.

It was popular to ridicule the finical "Monsieur Traveller," who was somewhat insolent by having "swum in a gondola;" or to raise a laugh at him who had "bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, and his bonnet in Germany." It did not occur to our immortal satirist that the taste which had borrowed the doublet and the bonnet, had also introduced to his happier notice the tales of Bandello and the Giuletta of Luigi Porto. The dandy of Bishop Hall almost resembles the fantastic picture of Horace, in illustrating a combination of absurdities. Hall paints with vigour:

> "A French head join'd to neck Italian;
> His thighs from Germany, his breast from Spain;
> An Englishman in none, a fool in all."

But if this egregious man of fashion borrowed the wordiness of Italian compliment, or the formality of the Spanish courtesy, he had been also taught the sonnet and the stanza, and those musical studies which now entered into the system of education, and probably gave delicacy to our emotions, and euphony to our language. The first attempts in the refinements of manners are unavoidably vitiated by too close a copy; and it is long before that becomes graceful which began in affectation. When the people experienced a ceaseless irritability,

a marvelling curiosity, to learn foreign adventures and to inspect strange objects, and "laid out ten doits to see a dead Indian," these were the nascent propensities which made Europe for them a common country, and indicated that insular genius which at a distant day was to add new dominions to the British empire.

This public opinion which this sovereign was creating she watched with solicitude, not only at home, but even abroad. No book was put forth against her government, but we find her ministers selecting immediately the most learned heads or the most able writers to furnish the replies*. Burghley, we are told, had his emissaries to inform him of the ballads sung in the streets; and a curious anecdote, at the close of the reign of Elizabeth, informs us how anxiously she pondered on the manifestations of her people's feelings.

* When Osorio published in Latin a bitter attack on Elizabeth and the English church, Cecil employed Walter Haddon to answer it in Latin; and, January 1563, sent Haddon's book in a despatch to France, to our ambassador there, that it might be published where Osorio's had first come out. Lord Burghley sent the book of the Jesuit Sanders, whom Fuller calls Slanders, "De Visibili Monarchia," to the Archbishop of Canterbury to get answered. The archbishop, having found the right man, writes to Lord Burghley, that "he has honested him with a room in the Arches" until he had completed the work. A libellous tract, entitled "A Discovery of Treason," in 1573, reflecting severely on Elizabeth's ministers, was immediately answered by a royal proclamation; and so was the libel on Leicester by the Jesuit Parsons, and many others.

The party of Lord Essex, on the afternoon before their insurrection, ordered the play of the tragical abdication of Richard the Second. It is one of the charges in their trial; and we learn, from a more secret quarter than the public trial, that the queen deeply felt the acting of this play at that moment as the watchword of the rebels, expressive of their design. The queen's fears transformed her into Richard the Second; and a single step seemed to divide her throne from her grave. The recollection of this circumstance long haunted her spirits; for, a year and a half afterwards, in a literary conversation with the antiquary Lambarde, the subject of a portrait of Richard the Second occurring, the queen exclaimed, "I am Richard the Second, know ye not that?" The antiquary, at once wary and ingenuous, replied, well knowing that the virgin queen would shrink were her well-beloved Essex to be cast among ordinary rebels, "Such a wicked imagination was attempted by a most unkind gentleman, the most adorned creature that ever your majesty made." The queen replied, "He that will forget God will also forget his benefactors." So long afterwards was the royal Elizabeth still brooding over the gloomy recollection.

In the art of government a new principle seemed to have arisen, that of adopting and guiding public opinion, which, in the mutations of civil and political society,

had emerged as from a chaos. A vacillating and impetuous monarch could not dare it; it was the work of a thoughtful sovereign whose sex inspired a reign of love. Elizabeth not only lived in the hearts of her people, but survived in their memories; when she was no more, her birth-day was long observed as a festival day; and so prompt was the remembrance of her deeds and her words, that when Charles the First once published his royal speech, an insidious patriot sent forth "The Speech of Queen Elizabeth," which being innocently printed by the king's printer, brought him into trouble. Our philosophic politician, Harrington, has a remarkable observation on the administration of Elizabeth, which, laying aside his peculiar views on monarchy, and his theoretical balances in the state, we may partly adopt. He says, "If the government of Elizabeth be rightly weighed, it seems rather the exercise of principality in a commonwealth than of sovereign power in a monarchy. Certain it is that she ruled wholly with an art she had to high perfection, by humouring and blessing her people."

Did Harrington imagine that political resembles physical science? In the revelations of the Verulamian philosophy, it was a favourite axiom with its founder, that we subdue Nature by yielding to her.

ORTHOGRAPHY AND ORTHOEPY.

SOME of the first scholars of our country stepped out of the circle of their classical studies with the patriotic design of inculcating the possibility of creating a literary language. This was a generous effort in those who had already secured their supremacy by their skill and dexterity in the two languages consecrated by scholars. Many of the learned engaged in the ambitious reform of our *orthography,* then regulated by no certain laws; but while each indulged in some scheme different from his predecessors, the language seemed only to be the more disguised amid such difficult improvements and fantastic inventions.

A curious instance of the monstrous anomalies of our orthography in the infancy of our literature, when a spelling-book was yet a precious thing which had no existence, appears in this letter of the Duchess of Norfolk to Cromwell Earl of Essex:—

"*My ffary gode lord—her I sand you in tokyn hoff the neweyer a glasse hoff Setyl set in Sellfer gyld I pra you tak hit (in) wort An hy wer habel het showlde be bater I woll hit war wort a m crone.*"

These lines were written by one of the most accomplished ladies of the sixteenth century, "the friend of scholars and the patron of literature." Dr. Nott, who has supplied this literary curiosity, has modernised the passage word by word; and though the idiom of the times is preserved, it no longer wears any appearance of vulgarity or of illiteracy.

"My very good lord,—Here I send you, in token of the New Year, a glass of setyll set in silver gilt; I pray you take it (in) worth. An I were able it should be better. I would it were worth a thousand crown."

The domestic correspondence, as appears in letters of the times, seems to indicate that the writers imagined that, by conferring larger dimensions on their words by the duplication of redundant consonants, they were augmenting the force, even of a monosyllable *!

In such disorder lay our orthography, that writers, however peculiar in their mode of spelling, did not even write the same words uniformly. Elizabeth herself wrote one word, which assuredly she had constantly in her mind, seven different ways, for thus has this queen written the word *sovereign*. The royal mistress of eight languages seemed at a loss which to choose for her command. The orthography of others eminent for

* See "The Paston Letters," edited by Sir JOHN FENN; and LODGE'S authentic and valuable Collection.

their learning was as remarkable, and sometimes more eruditely whimsical, either in the attempt to retrace the etymology, or to modify exotic words to a native origin; or, finally, to suit the popular pronunciation. What system or method could be hoped for at a time when there prevailed a strange discrepancy in the very names of persons, so variously written not only by their friends but by their owners? Lord Burleigh, when Secretary of State, daily signing despatches with the favourite *Læicester*, yet spelt his name *Leceſter*; and Leicester himself has subscribed his own name eight different ways *.

At that period down to a much later, every one seems to have been at a loss to write their own names. The name of *Villers* is spelt fourteen different ways in the deeds of that family. The simple dissyllabic but illustrious name of *Percy*, the bishop found in family documents, they had contrived to write in fifteen different ways!

This unsettled state of our *orthography*, and what it often depended on, our *orthoepy*, was an inconvenience detected even at a very early period. The learned Sir JOHN CHEKE, the most accomplished

* George Chalmers' "Apology for the Believers in the Shakespeare Papers," 94.—See on this subject in "Curiosities of Literature," art. "Orthography of Proper Names."

Greek scholar of the age, descended from correcting the Greek pronunciation to invent a system of English orthography. Cheke was no formal pedant; with an enlarged notion of the vernacular language, he aimed to restore the English of his day to what then he deemed to be its purity. He would allow of no words but such as were true English, or of Saxon original; admitting of no adoption of any foreign word into the English language, which at this early period our scholar deemed sufficiently copious. He objected to the English translation of the Bible, for its introduction of many foreign words; and to prove them unnecessary he retranslated the Gospel of St. Matthew, written on his own system of a new orthography. His ear was nice, and his Attic taste had the singular merit of giving concision to the perplexed periods of our early style. But his orthography deterred the eyes of his readers; however the learned Cheke was right in his abstract principle, it operated wrong when put in practice, for every newly-spelt word seemed to require a peculiar vocabulary.

When secretaries of state were also men of literature, the learned Sir THOMAS SMITH, under Elizabeth, composed his treatise on "*The English Commonwealth*," both in Latin and in English—the worthy companion of the great work of Fortescue. Not

deterred by the fate of his friend, the learned Cheke, he projected even a bolder system, to correct the writing of English words. He designed to relieve the ear from the clash of supernumerary consonants, and to liquefy by a vowelly confluence. But though the scholar exposed the absurdity of the general practice, where in certain words the redundant letters became mutes, or do not comprehend the sounds which are expressed, while in other words we have no letters which can express the sounds by which they are spoken, he had only ascertained the disease, for he was not equally fortunate in the prevention. An enlargement of the alphabet, ten vowels instead of five, and a fantastical mixture of the Roman, the Greek, and the Saxon characters, required an Englishman to be a very learned man to read and write his maternal language. This project was only substituting for one difficulty another more strange.

Were we to course the wide fields which these early "rackers of orthography" have run over, we should start, at every turn, some strange "winged words;" but they would be fantastic monsters, neither birds with wings nor hares with feet. Shakespeare sarcastically describes this numerous race: "Now he is turned ORTHOGRAPHER his words are a very fantastical banquet; just so many strange dishes." Some may

amuse. One affords a quaint definition of the combination of *orthoepy* with *orthography*, for he would teach "how to write or *paint the image of man's voice* like to the life or nature*." The most popular amender of our defective orthography was probably BULLOKAR, for his work at least was republished. He proposed a bold confusion, to fix the fugitive sounds by recasting the whole alphabet, and enlarging its number from twenty-four to more letters, giving two sounds to one letter, to some three; at present no mark or difference shows how the sounded letters should be sounded, while our speech (or orthography) so widely differed; but the fault, says old Bullokar, is in the *picture*, that is, the letters, not the speech. His scheme would have turned the language into a sort of music-book, where the notes would have taught the tones†. I extract from his address to his country a curious passage. "In true orthographie, both the *eye*, the *voice*, and the *eare* must consent perfectly without any let, doubt, or maze. Which want of concord in the eye, voice, and ear I did perceive almost thirtie yeares past by the very voice of children, who, guided

* "An Orthographie, composed by J (ohn) H (art), Chester Herald, 1569." A book of extreme rarity. A copy at Horne Tooke's sale was sold for 6*l.* 6*s.* It is at the British Museum.

† "Bullokar's Booke at large for the Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech," &c. &c., 1580, 4to.; republished in 1586.

by the eye with the letter, and giving voice according to the name thereof, as they were taught to name letters, yielded the eare of the hearer ā degree contrary sound to the word looked for, hereby grewe quarrels in the teacher, and lothsomeness in the learner, and great payne to both, and the conclusion was that both teacher and learner must go by rote, or no rule could be followed, when of 37 parts 31 kept no square, nor true joint."

All these reformers, with many subsequent ones, only continued to disclose the uneasy state of the minds of the learned in respect to our inveterate orthography; so difficult and so long did it take to teach the nation how to spell, an art in which we have never perfectly succeeded. Even the learned Mulcaster, in his zealous labour to "the right writing of the English tongue," failed, though his principle seems one of the most obvious in simplicity. This scholar, a master of St. Paul's school, freed from collegiate prejudices, maintained that "words should be written as they were spoken." But where were we to seek for the standard of our orthoepy? Who was to furnish the model of our speech, in a land where the pronunciation varied from the court, the capital, or the county, and as mutable from age to age? The same effort was made among our neighbours. In 1570, the learned Joubert

attempted to introduce a new orthography, without, however, the aid of strange characters. His rule was only to give those letters which yield the proper pronunciation; thus he wrote, *œuvres*, uvres; *françoise*, fransaise; *temps*, tems.

Among the early reformers of our vernacular idiom, the name of RICHARD MULCASTER has hardly reached posterity. Our philologer has dignified a small volume ostensibly composed for "the training of children*," by the elevated view he opened of far distant times from his own of our vernacular literature—and he had the glory of having made this noble discovery when our literature was yet in its infancy.

This learned master of St. Paul's school develops the historical progress of language, on the great philosophical principle that no impediment existed to prevent the modern from rivalling the more perfect ancient languages. In opposition to the many who contended that no subject can be philosophically treated in the maternal English, he maintained that no one language, naturally, is more refined than another, but is made so by the industry of "eloquent speech" in the writers themselves, and by the excellence of the matter; a native soil becomes more genial in emulating

* The first part of the Elementarie, which entreateth chieflie of the *right writing of our English Tong*. 1582, 12mo.

a foreign. I preserve the pleasing illustration of his argument in the purity of his own prose, and because he was the prophet of our literature.

"The people of Athens thus beautified their speech and enriched their tongue with all kinds of knowledge, both bred within Greece and borrowed from without. The people of Rome having plotted (planned) their government much like the Athenians, became enamoured of their eloquence, and translated their learning wherewith they were in love. The Roman authority first planted the Latin among us here, by force of their conquest; the use thereof for matters of learning doth cause it continue, though the conquest be expired. And, therefore, the learned tongues, so termed of their store, may thank their own people both for their fining (refinement) at home and their favour abroad. But did not these tongues use even the same means to brave (adorn) themselves, ere they proved so beautiful?

"There be two special considerations which keep the Latin and other learned tongues, though chiefly the Latin, in great countenance among us; the one is the knowledge which is registered in them; the other is the conference which the learned of Europe do commonly use by them, both in speaking and writing. We seek them for profit, and keep them for that conference; but whatever else may be done in our tongue,

either to serve private use, or the beautifying our speech, I do not see but it may well be admitted, *even though in the end it displaced the Latin*, as the Latin did others, and furnished itself by the Latin learning. For is it not indeed a marvellous bondage to become servants to one tongue for learning sake, the most of our time, with loss of most time, whereas we may have the very same treasure in our own tongue, with the gain of most time? Our own, bearing the joyful title of our liberty and freedom; the Latin tongue remembering us of our thraldom. I honour the Latin, but I worship the English. I wish all were in ours which they had from others; and by their own precedent, do let us understand how boldly we may venture, notwithstanding the opinion of some of our people, as desire rather to please themselves with a foreign tongue wherewith they are acquainted, than to profit their country in her natural language, where their acquaintance should be. The tongues which we study were not the first getters, though by learned travel (labour) they prove good keepers; but they are ready to return and discharge their trust when it shall be demanded, in such a sort, as it was committed for term of years, and not for inheritance."

"But it is objected," our learned Mulcaster proceeds, with his engaging simplicity, that "the English tongue

is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours, nay not there over all. What tho' (then)? It reigneth there, though it go not beyond sea. And be not English folk finish (refined) as well as the foreign, I pray you? And why not our tongue for speaking, and our pen for writing, as well as our bodies for apparel, and our tastes for diet? But you say that we have no cunning (knowledge) proper to our soil to cause foreigners to study it, as a treasure of such store. What tho' (then)? Why raise not the English wits, if they will bend their wills either, for matter or for method, in their own tongue, TO BE IN TIME AS WELL SOUGHT TO BY FOREIGN STUDENTS FOR INCREASE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, AS OUR SOIL IS SOUGHT TO AT THIS TIME BY FOREIGN MERCHANTS FOR INCREASE OF THEIR WEALTH* ?"

We, who have lived to verify the prediction, should not less esteem the prophet; the pedagogue, MULCASTER, is a philosopher addressing men—a genius who awakens a nation. His indeed was that "prophetic eye," which, amid the rudeness of its own days, in its clear vision contemplated on the futurity of the English

* In this copious extract from Mulcaster's little volume, we have a specimen of the unadulterated simplicity of the English language. I have only modernised the orthography for the convenience of the reader, but I have not altered a single word.

language; and the day has arrived, when "*in the end it displaced the Latin,*" and "FOREIGN STUDENTS" learn our language "FOR INCREASE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE."

The design of Mulcaster to regulate orthography by orthoepy was revived so late as in 1701, in a curious work, under the title of "*Practical Phonography,*" *by John Jones, M.D.* He proposed to write words as they are "fashionably" sounded. He notices "the constant complaints which were then rife in consequence of an unsettled orthography." He proclaims war against "the visible letters," which, not sounded, occasion a faulty pronunciation. I suspect we had not any spelling-books in 1701. I have seen Dyche's of 1710, but I do not recollect whether this was the first edition; this sage of practical orthography was compelled to submit to custom, and taught his scholars to read by the *ear*, and not by the *eye*. "Yet custom," he adds, "is not the truest way of speaking and writing, from not regarding the originals whence words are derived; hence abundance of errors have crept both into the pronunciation and writing, and English is grown a medley in both these respects." Such was the lamentation of an honest pedagogue in 1710.

The "Phonography" of Dr. Jones was probably well received; for three years after, in 1704, he returned to his "spelling," which, he observed, "however mean, con-

cerned the benefit of millions of persons." He had a notion to "invent a universal language to excel all others, if he thought that people would be induced to use it*."

Even the learned of our own times have indulged some of these philological reveries. One would hardly have suspected that Dr. FRANKLIN, whose genius was so wholly practical, contemplated to revolutionise the English alphabet: words were to be spelt by the sounds of their letters, which were to be regulated by six new characters, and certain changes in the vowels. He seems to have revived old Bullokar. PINKERTON has left us a ludicrous scheme of what he calls "an im-

* The second work of our Phonographer is entitled "The New Art of Spelling, designed chiefly for Persons of Maturity, teaching them to Spell and Write Words by the Sound thereof, and to Sound and Read Words by the Sight thereof,—rightly, neatly, and fashionably, &c., by J. Jones, M.D., 1704."

I give a specimen of his words as they are written and as they are pronounced—

VISIBLE LETTERS.	CUSTOMARY AND FASHIONABLY.
Mayor	Mair
Worcester	Wooster
Dictionary	Dixnary
Bought	Baut.

"All words," he observes, "were originally written as sounded, and all which have since altered their sounds did it for ease and pleasure's sake from

the harder to the easier
the harsher to the pleasanter } sound."
the longer to the shorter

proved language." Our vowel terminations amount but to one fourth of the language; all substantives closing in hard consonants were to have a final vowel, and the consonant was to be omitted after the vowel. We were to acquire the Italian euphony by this presumed melody for our harsh terminations. In this disfigurement of the language, a *quack* would be a *quaco*, and *that* would be *tha*. Plurals were to terminate in *a*: *pens* would be *pena*; papers, *papera*. He has very innocently printed the entire Vision of Mirza from the Spectator, on his own system; the ludicrous jargon at once annihilates itself. Not many years ago, JAMES ELPHINSTONE, a scholar, and a very injudicious one, performed an extraordinary experiment. He ventured to publish some volumes of a literary correspondence, on the plan of writing the words as they are pronounced. But this editor, being a Scotchman, had two sorts of Scotticisms to encounter—in idiom and in sound. Notwithstanding the agreeable subjects of a literary correspondence, it is not probable that any one ever conquered a single perusal of pages, which tortured the eye, if they did not the understanding.

We may smile at these repeated attempts of the learned English, in their inventions of alphabets, to establish the correspondence of pronunciation with orthography, and at their vowelly conceits to melodise

our orthoepy. All these, however, demonstrate that our language has never been written as it ought to have been. All our writers have experienced this inconvenience. Considerable changes in spelling were introduced at various periods, by way of experiment; this liberty was used by the Elizabethan writers, for an improvement on the orthography of Gower and Chaucer. Since the days of Anne, we have further deviated, yet after all our efforts we are constrained to read words not as they are written, and to write different words with the same letters, which leaves them ambiguous. And now, no reform shall ever happen, short of one by "the omnipotence of parliament," which, the great luminary of law is pleased to affirm, "can do anything except making a man a woman." Customary errors are more tolerable than the perplexing innovations of the most perverse ingenuity*. The eye, bewildered in such uncouth pages as are here recorded, found the most capricious orthography in popular use always less perplexing than the attempt to write words according to their pronunciation, which every one regulated by the sounds familiar to his own ear, and usually to his own county. Even the dismemberment of words,

* The Grammar prefixed to Johnson's Dictionary, curiously illustrated by the notes and researches of modern editors, will furnish specimens of many of these abortive attempts.

omitting or changing letters, distracts attention*; and modern readers have often been deterred from the study of our early writers by their unsettled orthography. Our later literary antiquaries have, therefore, with equal taste and sagacity, modernised their text, by printing the words as the writers, were they now living, would have transcribed them.

Such have been the impracticable efforts to paint the voice to the eye, or to chain by syllables airy sounds. The imperfections for which such reforms were designed in great part still perplex us. Our written language still remains to the utter confusion of the eye and the ear of the baffled foreigner, who often discovers

* When we began to drop the letter K in such words as *physic*, *music*, *public*, a literary antiquary, who wrote about 1790, observed on this new fashion, that "forty years ago no school-boy had dared to have done this with impunity." These words in older English had even another superfluous letter, being spelt *physicke*, *musicke*, *publicke*. The modern mode, notwithstanding its prevalence, must be considered anomalous; for other words ending with the consonants *ck* have not been shorn of their final *k*. We do not write *atiac*, *ransac*, *bedec*, nor *bulloc*, nor *duc*, nor good *luc*.

The appearance of words deprived of their final letter, though identically the same in point of sound, produce a painful effect on the reader. Pegge furnishes a ludicrous instance. It consists of monosyllables in which the final and redundant *k* is not written,—"*Dic* gave *Jac* a *kic* when *Jac* gave *Dic* a *knoc* on the *bac* with a *thic stic*." If even such familiar words and simple monosyllables can distract our attention, though they have only lost a single and mute letter, how greatly more in words compounded, disguised by the mutilation of several letters.

that what is written is not spoken, and what is spoken is not written. The orthography of some words leads to their false pronunciation. Hence originated that peculiar invention of our own, that odd-looking monster in philology, "a pronouncing dictionary," which offends our eyes by this unhappy attempt to write down sounds. They whose eyes have run over Sheridan, Walker, and other orthoepists, must often have smiled at their arbitrary disfigurements of the English language. These ludicrous attempts are after all inefficient, while they compel us to recollect, if the thing indeed be possible, a polysyllabic combination as barbarous as the language of the Cherokees.

We may sympathise with the disconcerted foreigner who is a learner of the English language. All words ending in *ugh* must confound him: for instance, *though*, *through*, and *enough*, alike written, are each differently pronounced; and should he give us *bough* rightly, he may be forgiven should he blunder at *cough*; if he escape in safety from *though*, the same wind will blow him out of *thought*. What can the foreigner hope when he discovers that good judges of their language pronounce words differently? A mere English scholar, who holds little intercourse with society, however familiar in his closet be his acquaintance with the words, and even their derivations, might fail in a material point, when

using them in conversation or in a public speech. A list of names of places and of persons might be given, in which not a single syllable is pronounced of those that stand written.

That a language should be written as it is spoken we see has been considered desirable by the most intelligent scholars. Some have laudably persevered in writing the past tense *red*, as a distinction from the present *read*, and anciently I have found it printed *redde*. Lord Byron has even retained the ancient mode in his Diary. By not distinguishing the tenses, an audible reader has often unwarily confused the times. *G* before *I* ungrammatical orthoepists declare is sounded hard, but so numerous are the exceptions, that the exceptions might equally be adopted for the rule. It is true that the pedantry of scholarship has put its sovereign veto against the practice of writing words as they are spoken, even could the orthoepy ever have been settled by an unquestioned standard. When it was proposed to omit the mute *b* in *doubt* and *debt*, it was objected that by this castration of a superfluous letter in the pronunciation, we should lose sight of their Latin original. The same circumstance occurred in the reform of the French orthography: it was objected to the innovators, that when they wrote *tems*, rejecting the *p* in *temps*, they wholly lost sight of the Latin original,

tempus. Milton seems to have laid down certain principles of orthography, anxiously observed in his own editions, printed when the poet was blind. An orthography which would be more natural to an unlearned reader is rejected by the etymologist, whose pride and pomp exult in tracing the legitimacy of words to their primitives, and delight to write them as near as may be according to the analogy of languages.

THE ANCIENT METRES IN MODERN VERSE.

A STRONG predilection to reproduce the ancient metres in their vernacular poetry was prevalent among the scholars of Europe; but, what is not less remarkable, the attempt everywhere terminated in the same utter rejection by the popular ear. What occasioned this general propensity of the learned, and this general antipathy in the unlearned?

These repeated attempts to restore the metrical system of the Greeks and the Romans would not only afford a classical ear, long exercised in the nice artifices of the ancient prosody, a gratification entirely denied to the uninitiated; but at bottom there was a deeper design—that of elevating an art which the scholar held to be degraded by the native but unlettered versifiers; and, as one of them honestly confessed, the true intent was to render the poetic art more difficult and less common. Had this metrical system been adopted, it would have established a privileged class. The thing was practicable; and, even in our own days, iambics and spondees, dactyls and tribrachs, charm a few classical ears by their torturous arrangement of words without

rhythm and cadence*. Fortunately for all vernacular poetry, it was attempted too late among the people of modern Europe ever to be substituted for their native melody, their rhythm, the variety of their cadences, or the consonance of rhyme.

With us the design of appropriating the ancient metres to our native verse was unquestionably borrowed from Italy, so long the model of our fashions and our literature. There it had early begun, but was neither admired nor imitated†. The nearly forgotten fantasy was again taken up by Claudio Tolommei, an eminent scholar, who composed an Italian poem with the Roman metres. More fortunate and profound than his neglected predecessors, Tolommei, in 1539, published his *Versi e Regole della* POESIA NUOVA—the very term afterwards adopted by the English critics—and promised hereafter to establish their propriety on principles deduced from philosophy and music. But before this code of "new poetry" appeared the practice had prevailed, for Tolommei illustrates "the rules" not only

* For a remarkable effusion of this ancient idolatry and classical superstition, see Quarterly Review, August 1834.

The ancient poetry of the Greeks was composed for recitation. The people never read, for they had no books; they listened to their rhapsodists; and their practised ear could decide on the artificial construction of verses regulated by *quantity*, and not by the latent delicacy and numerosity of which modern versification is susceptible.

† Quadrio, Storia e raggione d'ogni Poesia, i. 606.

by his own verses, but by those of other writers, already seduced by this obsolete novelty. But what followed? Poets who hitherto had delighted by their euphony and their rhyme, were now ridiculed for the dissonance which they had so laboriously struck out. A literary war ensued! The champions for "the new poetry" were remarkable for their stoical indifference amid the loud outcries which they had raised; something of contempt entered into their bravery, and it was some time before these obdurate poets capitulated.

In France the same attempt encountered the same fate. A few scholars, Jodelle, Passerat, and others, had the intrepidity to versify in French with the ancient metres; and, what is perhaps not generally known, later, D'Urfé, Blaise de Vigneres, and others, adopted *blank verse*, for Balzac congratulates Chapelain in 1639 that "Les vers sans rime sont morts pour jamais." French poetry, which at that period could hardly sustain itself with rhyme, denuded of this slight dress must have betrayed the squalidness of bare poverty. The "new poetry" in France, however, seems to have perplexed a learned critic; for with the learned his prejudices leaned in its favour, but as a faithful historian the truth flashed on his eyes. The French antiquary, Pasquier, stood in this awkward position, and on this subject has delivered his opinions

with great curiosity and honest naïveté. "Since only these two nations, the Greeks and the Romans, have given currency to these measures without rhymes, and that on the contrary there is no nation in this universe which poetises, who do not in their vulgar tongue use rhymes, which sounds have naturally insinuated themselves into the ear of every people for more than seven or eight centuries, even in Italy itself, I can readily believe that the ear is more delighted by our mode of poetry than with that of the Greeks and the Romans*."

The candour of the avowal exceeds the philosophy. Our venerable antiquary had greater reason in what he said than he was himself aware of; for rhyme was of a far more ancient date than his eight centuries.

It was in the Elizabethan period of our literature that, in the wantonness of learned curiosity, our critics attempted these experiments on our prosody, and, on the pretence of "reformed verse," were for revolutionising the whole of our metrical system.

The musical impression made by a period consisting of long and short syllables arranged in a certain order is what the Greeks called *rhythmus*, the Latins *numerus*, and we *melody* or *measure*. But in our verse, simply governed by accent, and whose rhythm wholly depends on the poet's ear, those durations of time, or

* Pasquier.—Les Recherches de la France, p. 624, fo. 1533.

sounds, like notes in music, slow or quick, long or short, which form the quantities or the time of the measured feet of the ancients, were no longer perceptible as in the inflection, the inversion, and the polysyllabic variety of the voluble languages of Greece and Rome. The artificial movements in the hexameter were inflicting on the ear of the uninitiated verse without melody, and, denuded of rhyme, seemed only a dislocated prose, in violation of the genius of the native idiom.

Several of our scholars, invested by classical authority, and carrying their fasces wreathed with roses, unhappily influenced several of our poets, among whom were Sidney and Spenser, in their youth subservient to the taste of their learned friend Gabriel Harvey, to submit their vernacular verse to the torturous Roman yoke. Had this project of versification become popular it would necessarily have ended in a species of poetry, not referring so much to the natural ear affected by the melody of emotion, as to a mechanical and severe scansion. To this Milton seems to allude in a sonnet to Lawes, the musician—

> "Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just *note* and *accent*, not to scan
> *With Midas' ears, committing short and long.*"

The poet of all youthful poets had a narrow escape from "dark forgetfulness" when from the uncouth

Latin hexameters, his "Fairy Queen" took refuge in the melodious stanza of modern Italy. STANYHURST has left a memorable woful version of Virgil, and the pedantic GABRIEL HARVEY had espoused this Latin intruder among the English muses. The majestic march of the Latin resounding lines, disguised in the miserable English hexameters, quailed under the lash of the satirical TOM NASH, who scourged with searching humour. "The Hexameter verse I grant to be a gentleman of an ancient house (so is many an English beggar), yet this clime of ours he cannot thrive in; our speech is too craggy for him to set his plough in; he goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one syllable, and down the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gait which he vaunts himself with among the Greeks and Latins."

A treatise on "the New Poetry," or "the Reformed Verse," for it assumed this distinction, was expressly composed by WILLIAM WEBBE, recommendatory of this "Reformation of our English verse*." Some years after Dr. THOMAS CAMPION, accomplished in music and verse, a composer of airs, and a poet of graceful fancy

* "A Discourse of English Poetrie; together with the Author's Judgment touching the Reformation of our English Verse," by WILLIAM WEBBE, graduate, 1586, 4to.

in masques, fluent and airy in his rhymes, seating himself in the critic's chair, renewed the exotic system. Notwithstanding his own felicity in the lighter measures of English verse, he denounces "the vulgar and inartificial custom of RIMING, which hath, I know, deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poetry *." He calls it "the childish titillation of rime."

We may regret that Dr. Campion, who composed in Latin verse, held his English in little esteem, since he scattered them whenever he was called on, and not always even printed them. The physician, for such was Campion, held too cheap his honours as a poet and a musician; however, he was known in his days as "SWEET MASTER CAMPION," and his title would not be disputed in ours. In dismissing his critical "Observations" he has prefixed a poem in what he calls "Licentiate Iambicks," which is our blank verse; it is a humorous address of an author to his little book consisting only of nearly five leaves:

"Alas, poor book, I rue
Thy rash selfe-love; go spread thy papery wings;
Thy lightness cannot helpe, or hurt my fame."

* "Observations on the Art of English Poesie, by THOMAS CAMPION, wherein is demonstratively proved, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers proper to itself, which are all in this Book set forth, and were never before this time by any man attempted, 1602."

The poet DANIEL replied by his "Defence of Rime," an elaborate and elegant piece of criticism, to which no reply was sent forth by the anti-rhymers.

It has often been inquired how came the vernacular rhyme to be wholly substituted for the classical metres, since the invaders of the Roman empire everywhere adopted the language of Rome with their own, for in the progress of their dominion everywhere they found that cultivated language established. The victors submitted to the vanquished when the contest solely turned on their genius.

A natural circumstance will explain the occasion of this general rejection of the ancient metres. These artificial structures were operations too refined for the barbarian ear. Their bards, who probably could not read, had neither ability nor inclination to be initiated into an intricate system of metre, foreign to their ear, their tastes, and their habits, already in possession of supremacy in their own poetic art. Their modulation gave rhythm to their recitative, and their musical consonance in their terminable sounds aided their memory; these were all the arts they wanted; and for the rest they trusted to their own spontaneous emotions.

Rhyme then triumphed, and the degenerate Latinists themselves, to court the new masters of the world, polluted their Latin metres with the rhymes too long

erroneously degraded as mere "Gothic barbarisms." Had the practice of the classical writers become a custom we should now be "committing long and short," and we should have missed the discovery of the new world of poetic melody, of which the Grecians and the Latins could never have imagined the existence.

ORIGIN OF RHYME.

CONTENDING theories long divided the learned world. One party asserted that the use of Rhyme was introduced by the Saracenic conquerors of Spain and of Sicily, for they had ascertained that the Arabian poets rhymed; the other, who had traced Rhyme to a northern source among the Scandinavian bards, insisted that Rhyme had a Gothic origin; and as Rhyme was generally used among the monks in the eighth century, they imagined that in the decline of ancient literature the dexterous monks had borrowed the jingle for their church hymns, to win the ear of their Gothic lords: both parties alike concurred in condemning Rhyme as a puerile invention and a barbarous ornament, and of a comparatively modern invention.

The opinions of the learned are transmitted, till by length of time they are accepted as facts; and in this state was Rhyme considered till our own days. Warton, in the course of his researches in the history of our poetry, was struck at the inaccuracy of one of these statements; for he had found that rhymed verse, both Latin and vernacular, had been practised much earlier than the period usually assigned. But Warton, though

he thus far corrected the misstatements of his predecessors, advanced no further. No one, indeed, as yet had pursued this intricate subject on the most direct principle of investigation; conjecture had freely supplied what prevalent opinion had already sanctioned; and we were long familiarised to the opprobrious epithet of "Monkish Rhymes." The subject was not only obscure, but apparently trivial; for Warton dismisses an incidental allusion to the origin of Rhyme by an apology for touching on it. "Enough," he exclaims in his impatience, "has been said on a subject of so little importance *;" and it is curious to observe, that the same vexatious exclamation occurred to a French literary antiquary. "We must not believe," said Lenglet du Fresnoy, "that we began to rhyme in France about 1250, as Petrarch pretends. The romance of Alexander existed before, and it is not probable that the first essay of our versification was a great poem. Abelard composed love-songs in the preceding century. I believe Rhyme was still more ancient; and it is useless to torment ourselves to discover from whom we learned to rhyme. As we always had poets in our nation, so we have also had Rhyme †." Thus two great poetical

* Warton's Second Dissertation on the Introduction of Learning into England.

† Lenglet du Fresnoy—Preface to his edition of the Roman de la Rose.

antiquaries in England and France had been baffled in their researches, and came to the same mortifying conclusion. They were little aware how an inquiry after the origin of Rhyme, could not be decided by chronology.

The origin of Rhyme was an inquiry which, however unimportant Warton in his despair might consider it, had, though inconclusively treated, often engaged the earnest inquiries of the learned in Italy and in Spain, in Germany and in France. It is remarkable that all the parties were equally perplexed in their researches, and baffled in their conclusions. Each inquirer seemed to trace the use of Rhyme by his own people to a foreign source, for with no one it appeared of native growth. The Spaniard Juan de la Enzina, one of the fathers of the Spanish drama, and who composed an "Art of Poetry," (*Arte de Trovar*, as they expressively term the art of invention,) fancied that Rhyme had passed over into Spain from Italy, though in the land of Redondillas the guitar seemed attuned to the chant of their Moorish masters; but in Italy Petrarch, at the opening of his epistles, declares that they had drawn their use of Rhyme from Sicily; and the Sicilians had settled that they had received it from the Provençals; while those roving children of fancy were confident that they had been taught their artless chimes by their

former masters, the Arabians! Among the Germans it was strenuously maintained that this modern adjunct to poetry derived its origin and use from the Northern Scalds. Fauchet, the old Gaulish antiquary, was startled to find that Rhyme had been practised by the primitive Hebrews!

Fauchet, struck by discovering the use of Rhyme among this ancient people, and finding it practised by the monks in their masses in the eighth century, suggested for its modern prevalence two very dissimilar causes. With an equal devotional respect for "the people of God," and for the monks, whom he considered as sacred, he concluded that "possibly some pious Christian by the use of Rhyme designed to imitate the holy people;" but at the same time holding, with the learned, Rhyme to be a degenerate deviation from the classical metres of antiquity, he insinuates, "or perchance some vile poetaster, to eke out his deficient genius, amused the ear by terminating his lines with these ending unisons." He had further discovered that the Greek critics had, among the figures of their rhetoric, mentioned the *homoioteleuton*, or consonance. The abundance of his knowledge contradicted every system which the perplexed literary antiquary could propose; and impatiently he concludes,—"Rhyme has come to us from some part of the world, or nation, whoever it may

be; for I confess I know not where to seek, nor what to conclude. It was current among the people, and the languages which have arisen since the ruin of the Roman empire *."

Since the days of ancient Fauchet, no subsequent investigators, even such great recent literary historians as Warton, Quadrio, Crescembini and Gray, Tiraboschi, Sismondi and Ginguené, have extricated us by their opposite theories from these uncertain opinions. It was reserved for the happy diligence of the learned Sharon Turner to explore into this abyss of darkness †. To defend the antiquity of the Rhyming Welsh bards, he pursued his researches through all languages, and demonstrated its early existence in all. His researches enable us to advance one more step, and to effect an important result, which has always baffled the investigators of these curious topics.

Rhyming poems are found, not only in the Hebrew but in the Sanscrit, in the Bedas, and in the Chinese

* Much curious matter will be found in the rare volume of Fauchet's "Recueil de l'Origine de la Langue et Poesie Françoise Ryme et Romans; plus les Noms et Summaire des Œuvres de cxxvii. Poètes François, vivant avant l'an MCCC.; liv. i. ch. vii., 1610, 4to."

† See "Two Inquiries respecting the Early Use of Rhyme," by Sharon Turner, Esq.—*Archæologia*, vol. xiv. The subject further enlarged, "On the Origin and Progress of Rhyme in the Middle Ages."—*Hist. of England*, iv. 386.

poetry*, as among the nations of Europe. It was not unknown to the Greeks, since they have named it as a rhetorical ornament; and it appears to have been practised by the Romans, not always from an accidental occurrence, but of deliberate choice.

To deduce the origin of rhyme from any particular people, or to fix it at any stated period, is a theory no longer tenable. The custom of rhyming has predominated in China, in Hindustan, in Ethiopia; it chimes in the Malay and Javanese poetry, as it did in ancient Judea: this consonance trills in the simple carol of the African women; its echoes resounded in the halls of the frozen North, in the kiosque of the Persian, and in the tent of the Arab, from time immemorial. RHYME must therefore be considered *as universal as poetry itself.*

Yet rhyme has been contemned as a "monkish jingle," or a "Gothic barbarism;" but we see it was not peculiar to the monks nor the Goths, since it was prevalent in the vernacular poetry of all other nations save the two ancient ones of Greece and Rome. Delighting the ear of the man as it did of the child, and equally attractive in the most polished as in the rudest state of society, rhyme could not have obtained this

* The second book the Chinese children read is a collection conveyed in *rhyming lines.—Davis on the Chinese.*

universality had not this concord of returning sounds a foundation in the human organisation influencing the mind. We might as well inquire the origin of dancing as that of rhyming; the rudest society as well as the most polished practised these arts at every era. And thus it has happened, as we have seen, that the origin of rhyme was everywhere sought for and everywhere found.

RHYMING DICTIONARIES.

If our poets in rhyme dared to disclose one of the grand mysteries of their art, they would confess that, to find rhymes for their lines is a difficulty which, however overcome, after all has botched many a fine verse; the second line has often altered the original conception of the preceding one. The finest poems in the language, if critically examined, would show abundant evidence of this difficulty *not overcome.* This difficulty seems to have occurred to our earliest critics, for Gascoigne, in his "Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of Verse or Rhyme in English"—and Webbe, in his "Discourse," repeats the precept—would initiate the young poet in the art of rhyme-finding: the simplicity of the critic equals the depth of his artifice.

"When you have one verse *well settled* and *decently ordered,* which you may dispose at your pleasure to end it with *what word you will;* then whatsoever the word is, you may speedily run over the other words which are answerable thereunto (for more readiness through all the letters alphabetically*), whereof you may choose that which will *best fit the sense* of your matter in that

* Here is the first idea of "A Dictionary of Rhymes," which has inspired so many unhappy bards.

place; as, for example, if your last word end in book, you may straightway in your mind run them over thus —book, cook, crook, hook, look, nook, pook, &c. &c. Now it is *twenty to one but always one of these shall jump with your former word and matter in good sense.*"

The poet in *rhyme* has therefore in his favour "twenty to one" of a chance that his second line may "jump" with his former one. We were not aware that the odds were so favourable, even when we look over the finished poetry of Pope, who has written so much, or of Gray, who has written so little. Boileau tells us he always chose a rhyme for his second line before he wrote out his first, that by this means he might secure the integrity of the sense; and this he called "the difficult art of rhyming." These are mysteries which only confirm the hazard which rhymers incur; and, on the whole, though we do marvellously escape, the poet at every rhyming line still stands in peril.

This torture of rhyme-finding seems to have occasioned a general affliction among modern poets; and an unhappy substitute was early found in arranging collections of rhymes, and which subsequently led to a monstrous device. In Goujet's "Bibliothèque Française," vol. iii., will be found a catalogue of these rhyming dictionaries: the earliest of the French was published in 1572. Indeed, some of these French

critics looked upon these rhyming dictionaries as part of the art of poetry, recommending pocket editions for those who in their walks were apt to poetise, as if finding a rhyme would prompt a thought.

Among these early attempts is an extravagant one by Paul Boyer. It is a kind of encyclopedia, in which all the names are arranged by their terminations, so that it furnishes a dictionary of rhymes.

The demand for rhymes seems to have continued; for in 1660 D'Ablancourt Fremont published a *Dictionnaire*, which was enlarged by Richelet in 1667. It seems we were not idle in threading rhymes in our own country, for Poole, in 1657, in his "Parnassus," furnishes a collection of rhymes; and he has had his followers. But the perfect absurdity or curiosity of a rhyming lexicographer appears in one of Walker's Dictionaries of the English language. As he was a skilful philologist, he has contrived to make it useful for orthography and pronunciation. He advances it as on a plan "not hitherto attempted;" and his volume on the whole, as Moreri observes of Boyer's, is a thing "*plaisant à considérer.*"

A dictionary of rhymes is as miserable a contrivance to assist a verse as counting the syllables by the finger is to regulate the measure; in the case of rhyme it is sense which should regulate the verse, and in that of metre it is the ear alone which can give it melody.

THE ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE.

AMONG the arts of English poesie, the most ample and most curious is an anonymous work*. The history of an anonymous book is sometimes liable to the most contradictory evidence. The present, first printed in 1589, we learn from the work itself, was in hand as early as in 1553. The author inscribed the volume to Queen Elizabeth, and the courtly critic has often adroitly addressed "the most beautiful, or rather the beauty, of queens;" and to illustrate that figure which he terms "the gorgeous," has preserved for us some of her regal verses.

Yet nowithstanding this votive gift to royalty, the printer has formally dedicated the volume to Lord Burleigh, acknowledging that "this book came into my hands with *its bare title without any author's name.*" The author himself could not have been at all concerned in delivering this work to the press, for having addressed the volume to the queen, he would never have sought for a patron in the minister.

This ambiguous author remained unknown after the

* The Arte of English Poesie, contrived in three bookes—the first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament, 1589, 4to.

publication, for Sir John Harrington, who lived in the circle of the court, designates him as "the unknown *God-father*, that, this last year save one (1589), set forth a book called 'The Arte of English Poesie.'" About twelve years afterwards, Carew, in his "Survey of Cornwall," appears to have been the first who disclosed the writer's name as "Master Puttenham;" but this was so little known among literary men, that three years later, in 1605, Camden only alludes to the writer as "the *gentleman* who proves that poets are the first politicians, the first philosophers, and the first historiographers." Eleven years after, Edmund Bolton, in his "Hypercritica," notices "this work (*as the fame is*) of one of Queen Elizabeth's pensioners, Puttenham." The qualifying parenthesis "as the fame is," leaves the whole evidence in a very ticklish condition.

Who was Puttenham? A name unknown, and whose writings are unnoticed by any contemporary. Even the baptismal name of this writer has been subject to contradiction*.

In the work itself the writer has interspersed many

* Ames appears first to have called him *Webster* Puttenham. Possibly Ames might have noted down the name from Carew, as Master Puttenham, which by an error of the pen, or the printer, was transformed into the remarkable Christian name of *Webster*. I cannot otherwise account for this misnomer. Steevens, in an indistinct reference to a manuscript, revealed it to be *George;* and

allusions to himself, from his nursery to his court-days. His nurse, a right-lined ancestor of the garrulous nurse of the Capulets, had exercised his prurient faculties in expounding an indecent riddle*, which our mature critic still deemed "pretty;" but, according to one of his rhetorical technical terms, "it holds too much of the *cachemphaton* or *foule speech*, and may be drawn unto a reprobate sense." Our author was a travelled gentleman, and by his residence at various courts, seems to have been connected with the *corps diplo-*

probably was led to that opinion by the knowledge of a manuscript work in the Harleian Collection by a George Puttenham. It is a defence of Elizabeth in the matter of the Scottish Queen. Ellis, our poetic antiquary, has distinguished our author as "Webster, alias George." All this taken for granted, the last editor, probably in the course of his professional pursuits, falls on a nuncupative will, dated 1590, of a *George* Puttenham; already persuaded that such a name appertained to the author of the Art of English Poetry, he ventured to corroborate what yet remained to be ascertained. All that he could draw from the nuncupative will of this *George* Puttenham is, that he "left all his goods, movable and immovable, moneys, and bonds," to Mary Symes, a favourite female servant; but he infers that "he probably was our author." Yet, at the same time, there turned up another will of one *Richard* Puttenham, "a prisoner in her Majesty's Bench." *Richard* therefore may have as valid pretensions to "The Arte of English Poesie" as *George*, and neither may be the author. This matter is trivial, and hardly worth an inquiry.

Haslewood, laborious but unfortunately uneducated, is the editor of an elegant reprint of this "Arte of English Poesie." A modern reader may therefore find an easy access to a valuable volume which had been long locked up in the antiquary's closet.

* See page 157 of the "The Arte of English Poesie."

matique, for he had been present on some remarkable occasions at foreign courts, which we discover by coeval anecdotes of persons and places. One passage relating to himself requires attention. Alluding to the polished hypocrisy practised in courts, he observes:—"These and many such-like disguisings we find in men's behaviour, and specially in the courtiers of foreign countries, *where in my youth I was brought up*, and very well observed their manner of life and conversation; for of *mine own country I have not made so great experience.*"

This seems as ambiguous as any part of our author's history, for at eighteen years of age he had addressed Edward the Sixth by "Our Eclogue of Elpine." When he tells us that "he had not had so great experience of his own country as of others," we may be surprised, for no contemporary writer has displayed such intimacy with the court anecdotes of England, which have studded many of his pages. Neither does the style, which bears no mark of foreign idiom, nor the collected matter of his art of poetry, which discovers a minute acquaintance with every species of English composition, preserving for us much fragmentary poetry, at all betray a stranger's absence from home. But, what seems more extraordinary, the writer frequently alludes to learned disquisitions, critical treatises, and to

dramatic compositions of his own—to "our comedy" and to "our enterlude," and has frequent illustrations drawn from poems of all sorts and measures of his own growth. It is one of the singularities of this unknown person that his writings were numerous, and that no contemporary has ever mentioned the name of Puttenham. How are we to reconcile these discrepancies, and how account for these numberless vernacular compositions, with the condition of one who was "brought up abroad, and who had such "little experience of his own country?" We appear to read a work composed by different persons.

The same anomalous character is attached to the work as we have discovered concerning the writer.

This "Arte of English Poesie," which Warton observes "remained long as a rule of criticism," and still may be consulted for its comprehensive system, its variety of poetic topics, and its contemporary historical anecdotes, is the work of a scholar, and evidently of a courtier. His scholastic learning furnished the terms of his numerous figures of rhetoric, each of which is illustrated by examples drawn from English literature; but aware that this uncouth nomenclature might deter, as he says, "the sort of readers to whom I write, too scholastical for our MAKERS," as he classically calls our poets, "and more fit for clerks than for courtiers, for

whose instruction this travail is taken," our logician was cast into the dilemma of inventing English descriptions for these Greek rhetorical figures. We had no English name—"the rule might be set down, but there was no convenient name to hold it in memory."

To familiarise the technical terms of rhetoric by substituting English descriptive ones, led to a ludicrous result. The Greek term of *histeron proteron* was baptised the *preposterous;* these are words misplaced, or, as our writer calls it, "in English proverb, the cart before the horse," as one describing his landing on a strange coast said thus *preposterously*, that is, placing before what should follow—

"When we had climb'd the cliff, and were ashore."

instead of

"When we had come ashore, and climb'd the cliff."

The *hipallage* he calls *the changeling*, when changing the place of words changes the sense; as in the phrase "come dine with me, and stay not," turned into "come stay with me, and dine not." This change of sense into nonsense he called "the changeling," in allusion to the nursery legend when fairies steal the fairest child, and substitute an ill-favoured one. This at least is a most fanciful account of nonsense! I will give the technical terms of satire; they display a refinement of conception which we hardly expected

from the native effusions of the wits of that day. *Ironia*, he calls the *dry-mock; sarcasmus*, the *bitter taunt;* the Greek term *asteismus* he calls *the merry scoff*—it is the jest which offends not the hearer. When we mock scornfully comes the *micterismus*, the *fleering frumpe*, as he who said to one to whom he gave no credit, "*No doubt, sir, of that!*" The *antiphrasis*, or the *broad flout*, when we deride by flat contradiction, antithetically calling a dwarf a giant; or addressing a black woman, "In sooth ye are a fair one!" The *charientismus* is *the privy nippe*, when you mock a man in a *sotto voce;* and the *hyperbole*, as the Greeks term the figure, and the Latins *dementiens*, our vernacular critic, for its immoderate excess, describes as "the over-reacher, or the loud liar." The rhetorical figures of our critic exceed a hundred in number, if Octavius Gilchrist has counted rightly, all which are ingeniously illustrated by fragments of our own literature, and often by poetical and historical anecdotes by no means common and stale. We must appreciate this treasure of our own antiquity, though we may smile when we learn that while we speak or write, however naturally, we are in fact violating, or illustrating, this heap of rhetorical figures, without whose aid unconsciously our *fleering frumpes*, our *merry scoffs*, and our *privy nippes*, have been intelligible all our days.

In the more elevated spirit of this work, the writer opens by defining the poet, after the Greek, to be "a maker" or creator, drawing the verse and the matter from his native invention,—unlike the *translator*, who therefore may be said to be a versifier, and not a poet. This canon of criticism might have been secure from the malignity of hypercriticism. It happened, however, that in the year following that in which "The Art of Poetry" was published, Sir John Harrington put forth his translation of Ariosto, and, presuming that none but a poet could translate a poet, he caught fire at the solemn exclusion. The vindictive "versifier" invented a merciless annihilation both of the critic and his "Art," by very unfair means; for he proved that the critic himself was a most detestable poet, and consequently the very existence of "The Art" itself was a nullity! "All the receipts of poetry prescribed," proceeds the enraged translator of Ariosto, "I learn out of this very book, never breed excellent poets. For though the poor gentleman laboureth to make poetry an art, he proveth nothing more plainly than that it is a *gift* and not an *art*, because making himself and many others so cunning in the art, yet he sheweth himself so slender a gift in it."

Was this critic qualified by nature and art to arbitrate on the destinies of the muses? Were his taste and

sensibility commensurate with that learning which dictated with authority, and that ingenuity which reared into a system the diversified materials of his critical fabric? We hesitate to allow the claims of a critic whose trivial taste values "the courtly trifles," which he calls "pretty devices," among the inventions of poesy; we are startled by his elaborate exhibition of "geometrical figures in verse," his delight in egg or oval poems, tapering at the ends and round in the middle, and his columnar verse, whose pillars, shaft, and capital, can be equally read upwards and downwards. This critic, too, has betrayed his utter penury of invention in "parcels of his own poetry," obscure conceits in barbarous rhymes; by his intolerable "triumphals," poetical speeches for recitation; and a series of what he calls "partheniades," or new-year's gifts,"—bloated eruptions of those hyperbolical adulations which the maiden queen could endure, but which bear the traces of the poetaster holding some appointment at court.

When the verse flowed beyond the mechanism of his rule of scanning, and the true touch of nature beyond the sympathy of his own emotions, the rhetorician showed the ear of Midas. He condemns the following lines as "going like a minstrel's music in a metre of eleven, very harshly in my ear, whether it be for lack of good rime or of good reason, or of both, I wot not."

And he exemplifies this lack of "good rime and good reason, or both," by this exquisitely tender apostrophe of a mother to her infant:

"Now suck, child, and sleep, child, thy mother's own joy,
Her only sweet comfort to drown all annoy;
For beauty, surpassing the azured sky,
I love thee, my darling, as ball of mine eye."

Such a stanza indeed may disappoint the reader when he finds that we are left without any more.

In the history of this ambiguous book, and its anonymous author, I discover so many discrepancies and singularities, such elaborate poetical erudition, combined with such ineptitude of poetic taste, that I am inclined to think that the more excellent parts could never have been composed by the courtly trifler. It is remarkable that this curious art of English poetry was ascribed to SIDNEY; and Wanley, in his catalogue of the Harley Library, assigns this volume to Spenser*.

* The following letter is an evidence of the uncertain accounts respecting this author among the most knowing literary historians. Here, too, we find that Webster, or George, or Richard, is changed into Jo!—

"What authority Mr. Wood has for Jo. Puttenham's being the author of the Art of English Poetry I do not know. Mr. Wanley, in his Catalogue of the Harley Library, says, that *he had been told that Edmund Spenser was the author of that book, which came out anonymous.* But Sir John Harrington, in his preface to Orlando Furioso, gives so hard a censure of that book, that Spenser could not possibly be the author."—*Letter from* THOMAS BAKER *to the Hon. James West*, printed in the European Mag., April 1788.

I lay no stress on the singular expression of Sir John Harrington, applied to the present writer, as "the unknown *godfather*," which seems to indicate that the presumed writer had named an offspring without being the parent. Nor will I venture to suggest that this work may at all have been connected with that treatise of "the English poet," which Spenser, we know, had lost and never recovered. The poet lived ten years after the present publication, and it does not appear that he ever claimed this work. Manuscripts, however, we may observe, strangely wandered about the world in that day, and such literary foundlings often fell into the hands of the charitable. In that day of modest publication, some were not always solicitous to claim their own; and there are even instances of the original author, residing at a distance from the metropolis, who did not always discover that his own work had long passed through the press; so narrow then was the sphere of publication, and so partial was all literary communication.

One more mystery is involved in the authorship of this remarkable work: first printed in 1589, we gather from the book itself that it was in hand at least as early as in 1553. This glorious retention of a work during nearly forty years, would be a literary virtue with which we cannot honour the trifler who complacently alludes

to so many of his own writings which no one else has noticed, and unluckily for himself has furnished for us so many "parcels of his poetry," to exemplify "the art."

If we resolve the enigma, by acknowledging that this learned and curious writer has not been the only critic who has proved himself to be the most woful of poetasters, this decision will not account for the mysterious silence of the writer in allowing an elaborate volume, the work of a great portion of a life, to be cast out into the world unnamed and unowned.

I find it less difficult to imagine that some stray manuscript, possibly from the relics of SIDNEY, or perhaps the lost one of SPENSER, might have fallen into the hands of some courtly critic, or "the Gentleman Pensioner," who inlaid it with many of his own trivialities: the discrepancy in the ingenuity of the writing with the genius of the writer in this combination of learning and ineptitude would thus be accounted for; at present it may well provoke our scepticism.

THE DISCOVERIE OF WITCHCRAFT.

A SINGLE volume sent forth from the privacy of a retired student, by its silent influence may mark an epoch in the history of the human mind among a people.

Such a volume was "The Discoverie of Witchcraft, by Reginald Scot," a singular work which may justly claim the honour in this country of opening that glorious career which is dear to humanity and fatal to imposture.

Witchcraft and magic, and some similar subjects, through a countless succession of ages, consigned the human intellect to darkness and to chains. In this country these conspiracies against mankind were made venerable by our laws and consecrated by erring piety. They were long the artifices of malignant factions, who found it mutually convenient to destroy each other by the condemnation of crimes which could never be either proved or disproved. The sorcerers and witches under the church of Rome were usually the heretics; and our Henry the Eighth, who was a Protestant pope, transferred the grasp of power to the civil law, and an act of Parliament of the Reformation made witchcraft

felony. Dr. Bulleyn, a celebrated physician and a reformer, who lived through the gloomy reign of Philip and Mary, bitterly laments "that while so many blessed men are burned, witches should walk at large." When the act fell into disuse Elizabeth was reminded, by petitions from the laity and by preaching from the clergy, that "witches and sorcerers were wonderfully increasing, and that her Majesty's subjects pined away until death." Witchcraft was again confirmed to be felony.

The learned and others were fostering the traditions of the people about spirits, the incubus, and the succubus, the assemblies of witches, and the sabbaths of Satan. Some constructed their theories to explain the inexplicable; and too many, by torture, extorted their presumed facts and delusive confessions. The sage doated—the legal functionaries were only sanguinary executioners; and the merciful, with the kindest intentions, were practising every sort of cruelty, by what was termed trials to save the accused. The history of these dismal follies belongs even to a late period of the civilisation of Christian Europe! An enlightened physician of Germany had raised his voice in defence of the victims who were suffering under the imputation of Sorcery; * not denying the Satanic potency, he main-

* De Prestigiis Demonum et Incantationibus ac Veneficiis, 1564.

tained that the devil was very well able to execute his own malignant purposes without the aid of such miserable agents. It required a protracted century ere Balthaser Bekker's "World Bewitched" could deprive Satan himself of his personality, indeed of his very existence. But it was a subject to be tenderly touched; superstition was a sacred thing, and too often riveted with theology; and though the learned Wierus had thus guarded his system, to a distant day he encountered the polemical divines. One of his fiercest assailants was a layman, the learned Bodin, he who has composed so admirable a treatise on Government, now deeply plunged into the "Demonomanie des Sorciers." The volume of Wierus, he tells us, "made his hair stand on end." "Shall we," he cries, credit "a little physician" before all the philosophers of the world, and the laws of God which condemn sorcerers?

While Wierus and Bodin had been thus employed, an Englishman, Reginald Scot, in the serene retreat of a studious life, was silently labouring on the development of this great moral conquest over the prejudices of Europe. Reginald Scot, who passed his life in the occupation of his studies, seems to have concentrated them on this great subject, for he has left no other work, except an esteemed tract on the cultivation of the hop—the vine of his Kentish county. Although

he took no degree at college, his erudition was not the less extensive, as appears by his critical knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. But it was chiefly by his miscellaneous reading, where nothing seems to have escaped his insatiable curiosity on the extraordinary subjects which he ventured to scrutinise with such minute attention, that he was enabled to complete one of the most curious investigations of the age. Anthony Wood, in his peculiar style, tells us that "Scot gave himself up solely to *solid reading*, and to the perusal of *obscure authors* that had by the generality of the learned been neglected." This is a curious description of the early state of our vernacular literature, and of those students who, watchful over the spirit of the times, sought a familiar acquaintance with the opinions of their contemporaries. All writers were condemned as "obscure" who stood out of the pale of classical antiquity; and plain Anthony, who rarely dipped into the writings of Greece and Rome, but was an incessant lover of the miscellaneous writers of modern date, distinguishes his favourites as "solid reading." In the days of Reginald Scot our scholars never ventured to quote other authority than some ancient; but the poets from Homer to Ovid, the historians from Tacitus to Valerius Maximus, and the essayists from Plutarch to Aulus Gellius, could not always supply arguments and knowledge for an age

and on topics which had nothing in common with their own.

With more elevated views than Wierus, Scot denied the power of sorcerers, because it attributed to them an omnipotence which can only be the attribute of divine power. Our philosopher could publish only half the truth. "My question is not, as many fondly suppose, whether there be witches or not, but whether they can do such miraculous works as are imputed unto them." He thus adroitly eludes an argument which the public mind was not yet capable of comprehending. The "Discoverer" had to encounter a fierce host in shaking the predominant creed. The passions of mankind were enlisted against the zealous antagonist of an ancient European prejudice; the vital interests of priestly exorcists were at stake. To doubt of a supernatural agency seemed to some to be casting a suspicion over miracles and mysteries. The most ticklish point was the difficulty of explaining Scriptural phrases, which Reginald Scot denied related to witches, in the ordinary sense attached to these miserable women; the Hebrew term merely designating a female who practised the arts of "a poisoner," or "a cozener or cheat." The whole scene of the witch of Endor seems to have racked "the Discoverer's" invention through several chapters, to unveil the preparatory

management of such incantations, by the ventriloquising Pythonissa, and her confederate, some lusty priest. All these Scot presumes to trace in the obscure and interrupted narrative of the Israelitish Macbeth, who, in his despair, hastened by night to listen to his approaching fate, which hardly required the gift of prophecy to predict.

Our "Discoverer" prepared his readers for a revolution in their opinions. It appears, that in his day, notwithstanding some fairies still lurking in the bye-corners of our poets, the whole fairy creed had in fact passed away. He appeals to this native mythology, now utterly exploded, as an evidence of populâr infatuation; and our philosopher observes, that he cannot hope that the partial reader should look with impartial eyes on this book; it were labour lost to ask for this, —for, he adds, "I should no more prevail therein, than if *a hundred years since, I should have entreated your predecessors* to believe that Robin Goodfellow, that great but antient bull-beggar, had been but a cousening merchant, and no devil indeed." This was a philosophical parallelism; and the corollary pinched the present generation concerning their witches, they who were now holding their fathers dotards, for their belief in fairies.

The volume abounds with many strange incidents,

which its singular subject involved. The solitary witch of the homestead was not the poetic witch uttering her incantations at her mystic cauldron. Her homely feats are familiar, but the revelations of the impostures are not. "The devils and spirits," the powers of the kingdom of darkness, are more fantastic. These raw materials have been woven in the rich looms of Shakespeare and Goethe. Our author included in his volume a complete treatise of legerdemain, or the conjuring art. To convince the people that many acts may appear miraculous without the intervention of a miracle, he ingeniously initiated himself into the deceptious practices of the juggler; but he dreaded lest the spectators of his dexterity should depose against his own witchcraft, and "the Familiar," his confederate. Our seer, to save himself from fire or water, has not only minutely explained these "deceitful arts," but cautiously accompanied them by wood-cuts of the magical instruments used on these occasions. At the time, these were surprising revelations. The sagacity of our author anticipated the fate of his work. It appears to have shaken the credulity of a very few reflecting magistrates; yet such scholars as Sir Thomas Smith, the great political writer, when he retired from public life, as a justice of peace, was active in punishing witches. But the book was denounced by the divines.

When Reginald Scot's work was translated into Dutch, we learn from an arch-enemy of philosophy, the intolerant Calvinistical polemic Voetius, that "this book was an inexhaustible source, whence not a few learned and unlearned persons in the Netherlands have begun to doubt, and grow sceptics and libertines with regard to witchcraft. Our country is infected with libertines and half libertines, and they have proceeded to such a pitch of ignorance, that this set of new Sadducees laugh at all the operations and apparitions of the devils, as phantoms and fables of old women, and timorous superstition." The work was more successful abroad than at home; and indeed, how often have the benefactors of mankind experienced, that the voice of foreigners is the voice of posterity! They decide without prepossessions.

The FIRST edition of the "Discoverie of Witchcraft," 1584, is of extreme rarity, the copies having been burned by the order of James, on his accession to the English throne, in compliance with the act of parliament of 1603, which ratified a belief in witchcraft throughout the three kingdoms; but the author had not survived to see that day. This awful prejudice broke out afresh under the fanatical government, and gave rise to an infamous class of men who were called "witch-finders." When a reward was publicly offered,

there seemed to be no end in finding witches. It was probably this great evil which reminded the people of Scot, whose work was reprinted in 1651, but the public so eagerly required another edition, that it was republished in 1665, fo. The fact was, that justices, judges, and juries had so little improved by the *second* edition, that many had kept with great care their note-books of "Examinations of Witches," and were discovering "hellish knots of them." It was only in the preceding year that Sir Matthew Hale had left for execution two female victims, without even summing up the evidence, solely resting on the fact that "there were witches," for which assumption he appealed "to the Scriptures," and he added, to "the wisdom of all nations!" What is not less remarkable in this trial, the illustrious corrector of "vulgar errors," Sir Thomas Browne, in his medical character examining the accused person, who was liable to fainting fits, acknowledged that the fits were natural and common; but the philosopher was so prepossessed that the woman was a witch, that he pronounced against her, alleging this mystical explanation of "the subtleties of the devil," who had taken this opportunity of her natural fits to be "co-operating with her malice!" What a demonstration that superstition holds its mastery even over the philosophic intellect!

The popular prejudice was confirmed by narratives of witchcraft, by Joseph Glanvil, one of the early founders of the Royal Society; by the visionary learning of the platonic Dr. More; and by the theological dogmatism of Meric Casaubon. Dr. More was desirous that every parish should keep a register of all authentic histories of apparitions and witchcraft; and Glanvil was so staunch a believer, that he considered that the strong unbelief in some persons was an evidence of what they denied; for that so confident an opinion could not be held but by some kind of witchcraft and fascination in the senses. All these, and such as these, treat with extreme contempt and cover with obloquy "the Father of the modern Witch-advocates," "the Gallant of the Old Hags!" This was our Reginald Scot.

The most elaborate treatise on the subject was now sent forth by John Webster; "The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft," 1677, fo. He defends Scot and Wierus against Glanvil and Casaubon. He was a clergyman, and dares not agitate the question, *an sint*, whether there be witches or not; but *quomodo sint*, in what manner they act, and what the things are they do, or can perform. The state of the question is not simply the being of witches, or *de existencia*, but only *de modo existendi*. The dispute of their manner of existing necessarily supposes their existence. He has, however,

detected many singular impostures, and the volume is full and curious *.

Glanvil and his "Saducismus Triumphatus, or full evidence concerning Witches," 1668, a book so popular that I have never met with a very fair copy, introduced with plenary evidence a minute narrative of "the Demon of Tedworth," whose invisible drum beat every night for above a year, in the house of some reverend magistrate, who had evidently raised a spirit which he could not lay, and whose Puck-like pranks wofully deranged the whole unsuspicious family. This tale, confirmed by affidavits, but shaken by demurrers, was long

* Webster notices the popular delusions of the country people in the following passage, in which he is speaking of a sound judgment as necessary to a competent witness:—"They ought to be of a sound judgment, and not of a vitiated and distempered phantasie, nor of a melancholic constitution; for these will take a bush to be a bugbear, and a black sheep to be a demon; the noise of the wild swans, flying high in the night, to be spirits—or, as they call them here in the North, *Gabriel Ratchets;* the calling of a daker hen, in the meadow, to be the *whistlers;* the howling of the female fox in a gill or clough for the male, to be the cry of fairies." "The *Gabriel Ratchets*," in our author's time, seem to have been the same with the German *Rachtvogel*, or *Rachtraven*. The word and the superstition are well known in Lancashire, though in a sense somewhat different; for the *Gable-Rachets* are supposed to be something like litters of puppies yelping (gabbling) in the air. *Ratch* is certainly a dog in general.

The *whistlers* are the green or whistling plovers, which fly very high in the night uttering their characteristic note.—*Whitaker's History of Whalley.*

an article of faith, but finished by furnishing the comedy of Addison's "Drummer." The controversy about witches, including that of ghosts, which were equally the incessant but volatile phantoms of their chase, now assumed a more serious aspect than ever. The illustrious Boyle, who had observed the unguarded heat with which it was pursued, vainly cautioned the parties, that even religion might suffer by weak arguments drawn from uncertain statements. Boyle had more reason to say this than one might suppose; for Dr. More, ever too vehement and too fanciful, had exclaimed in his unhappy conviction, "No bishop, no king! no spirit, no God * !"

* In a correspondence I have read between Dr. More and one of his enthusiastic disciples, the Rev. Edmund Elys, the letters usually turn on the reality of apparitions and magical incantations; both these learned men were hunting about all their lifetimes to find a true ghost. Elys often breaks out in triumph that he has at length discovered an authentic ghost; in subsequent letters the evidence gradually diminishes, and finally the apparition and evidence vanish together. The following pious doubts, addressed to the philosophic More, may amuse the reader:—

"Most honoured dear Sir,

"I should be troublesome to you if I did not repress many strong inclinations to write to you, for I do not take greater comfort in anything than in the thoughts of *you* and the *notions* you have communicated to the world.

"I now entreat you to tell me one of your arguments why this act is unlawfull, viz., to inquire by this black art (as I am sure it is, though I am told some preachers allow it) whether such or such a *suspected person* has stolen a thing; viz., by putting a key into

Shadwell in his "Lancashire Witches," resolved to advance nothing without authority, accompanies that comedy with ample notes, drawn from the writings of witch-believers. His witches, therefore, are far beneath those of Shakespeare, for they do nothing but what we are told witches do; the whole system of witchery is here exhibited. In his remarkable preface, Shadwell tells us, that if he had not represented them as *real* witches, "it would have been called atheistical by a prevailing party."

The belief in witchcraft was maintained chiefly by

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the midst of a Bible, and clasping or tying the Bible on it, and then hanging the key upon some man's finger put into the hollow of the handle; and then one of the company saying these words—Ps. l. 19, 20, 'When thou a thief doth see," &c., to these words 'To use that life most vile.' If the Bible turn upon the finger (holding it by the key) when such or such a person is named, then he is judged to be the thief. Some persons that dined at the same table with me had an humour to try this trick. I declared it was very *wicked*, &c., but, however, they would do it. And a gentleman of great acquaintance in the world said that a learned divine asserted it was no hurt, &c. I thought it might not be a sin for me to stay in the room after I had made that profession of my dissent, &c. They tried what would be done; and, upon the naming of one or two, the key did not move, but on the naming of one (who afterwards was known to be an accomplice in the theft) the Bible turned on the finger very plainly in the sight of divers persons, myself being one. The gentleman that was most eager to have the *experiment* holds that there never were any *apparitions*, &c. I told him that this was equivalent *to an apparition;* for here was an *ocular demonstration* of the existence and operation of an intelligent invisible being, &c."

that fatal error which had connected the rejection of any supernatural agency in old women with religious scepticism; and it was fostered by the statutes, which with the lawyer admitted of no doubt. "We cannot doubt of the existence of witchcraft, seeing that our law ordains it to be punished by death," was the argument of Sir George Mackenzie, the great Scottish advocate; nor is it less sad to see such minds as that of the great Dr. Clarke, celebrated for his logical demonstrations, thus reasoning on witchcraft, astrology, and fortune-telling: "All things of this sort, whenever they have any reality in them, are evidently diabolical; and when they have no reality, they are cheats and lying impostures *." The great demonstrator thus confesses "the reality" of these chimeras! Another not less celebrated divine, Dr. Bentley, infers, that "no English priest need affirm the existence of sorcery or witchcraft, since they now have a public law which they neither enacted nor procured, declaring these practices to be felony †!" Did the doctor know that churchmen have had no influence in creating that belief, or in enacting this statute?

The gravity of Blackstone seems strangely disturbed when as a lawyer he was compelled to acknowledge its

* In his Exposition of the Church Catechism.

† Remarks upon a late Discourse of Free-Thinking, 1743, p. 47.

existence. "It is a crime of which one knows not well what account to give." The commentator on the laws of England found no other resource than to turn to Addison, whose gentle sagacity could only discover that "*in general*, there has been such a thing as witchcraft, though one cannot give credit to any *particular* modern instance of it." Not one of these writers had yet ventured to detect the hallucinations of self-credulity in the victims, and the crimes of remorseless men in their persecutors. The name and the volume of their own countryman had never reached them, who two centuries before had elucidated these chimeras.

After the statute against witchcraft had been repealed in England, we must not forget that an act of the Assembly of the Calvinistic Church of Scotland confesses "as a great national sin, the act of the British parliament abolishing the burning and hanging of witches."

The name of Reginald Scot does not appear in the Biographia Britannica; and it was only from a short notice by Bayle, that Dr. Birch, in his translation of the General Dictionary, was induced to draw up a life of our earliest philosopher. Such was the fate of this "English gentleman," as Bayle has described him; and the philosophical reader, in what is now before him, may detect the shifting shades of truth, till it settles in

its real and enduring colour; the philosopher had demonstrated a truth which it required a century and a half for the world to comprehend.

That such courageous and generous tempers as that of REGINALD SCOT should fail themselves of being the spectators of that noble revolution in public opinion which was the ripening of their own solitary studies, is the mortifying tale of the benefactors of mankind.

THE FIRST JESUITS IN ENGLAND.

THE fate of the English protestants, exiles under the Marian administration, was, as the day arrived, to be the lot of the English papists, under the government of Elizabeth. These opposing parties, when cast into the same precise position, had only changed their place in it; and in this revolution of England, in both cases alike, the expatriated were to return, and those at home were to become the expatriated.

During the short reign of Edward, conformity was not pressed; and notwithstanding two statutes, the one to maintain the queen's supremacy, and the other strictly to enjoin the use of the Book of Common Prayer, through the first ten or twelve years of Elizabeth Romanist and Protestant entered into the same parish church. "The old Marian priests," whom the rigid papists indeed afterwards scornfully decried, were wont to inquire of any one, to use their own term, "whether they were *settled?*" and were satisfied to lure from the seduction of a protestant pulpit some lonely waverer, if by chance they found an easy surrender. There were, indeed, many who would neither "settle" nor "waver," and these were called "Occa-

sionalists;" they insisted that "Occasional conformity" had nothing *per se malum*—that human laws might be complied with or neglected according to circumstances; so learned doctors had opined! The old religion seemed melting into the new, when the Romanists, of another temper than "the old Marian priests," protested against this pacific toleration, and procured from the fathers of the Council of Trent a declaration against schismatics and heretics: this was but the prelude of what was to come from a final authority; but this was sufficient to divide the Romanists of England, and to alarm the Protestants, yet tender in their reformation.

The sterner Romanists gradually seceded from their preferments in the church or their station in the universities, and at length forsook the land. Two eminent persons effected a revolution among their brother-exiles, of which our national history bears such memorable traces. These extraordinary men were Dr. ALLEN, of Oriel College, a canon in the cathedral of York, and who subsequently was invested with the purple as the English cardinal, and ROBERT PARSONS, of Baliol, afterwards the famous Jesuit. They left England at different periods, but when they met abroad, their schemes were inseparable—and possibly some of their writings; though it may be doubted whether the subtile and daring genius of Parsons, which Cardinal Allen

declared equalled the greatest whom he had known, ever acted a secondary part.

Allen abandoned his country for ever in 1565. He soon projected the gathering of his English brothers, scattered in foreign lands; he conceived the formation for the fugitive Romanists of England of another Oxford, ostensibly to furnish a succession of Romish priests to preserve the ancient papistry of England, which was languishing under "the old Marian priests." In 1568, an English college was formed at Douay; in twenty years Allen witnessed his colleges rise at Rheims, at Rome *, at Louvain and St. Omer, and at Valladolid, at Seville, and at Madrid. From these cradles and nurseries of holiness to Rome, and of revolt to England, issued those seminary priests whose political religionism elevated them into martyrdom, and involved them in inextricable treason †.

* At Rome there was "The English Hospital," founded by two of the kings of our Saxon Heptarchy; a thousand years had consecrated that small domicile for the English native; but now the emigrants, and not the pilgrims, of England claimed an abode beneath the papal eye. It had been a refuge to the fugitives from the days of Henry the Eighth; subsequently this English Hospital, under the auspices of Cardinal Allen, assumed the higher title of "The English College at Rome," and the Jesuit Parsons closed his days as its rector without attaining to the cardinalship.

† The seminarists were universally revered as candidates of martyrdom.—See *Baronius Martyrol.* Rome, 29 Dec. St. Philip Neri, who lived in the neighbourhood of the English Seminary in Rome,

In these labours Allen had, as early as 1575, associated himself with Parsons, who in that year had entered into the order of the Jesuits. Allen sought the vigorous aid of the "soldiery of Jesus," alleging that "England was as glorious a field for the propagation of faith as the Indies." From that time, the more ambiguous policy and deeper views of that celebrated Society gave a new character to the Romish missionaries to England, and were the cause of all their calamities; a history written in blood, at whose legal horrors our imagination recoils, and our sympathy for the honourable and the hapless may still dim our eyes with tears.

Parsons, pensioned by Spain and patronised by Rome—wide and deep in his comprehensive plans—slow in deliberation, but decisive in execution—of a cold and austere temper, yet flexible and fertile in intrigue—with his working head and his ceaseless hand—once, at least, looked for nothing less than the dominion of England, ambitious to restore to Papal Rome a realm which had once been her fief. This daring Machiavellian spirit had long been the subtle and insi-

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would frequently stand near the door of the house to view the students going to the public schools. This saint used to bow to them, and salute them with the words—"*Salvete flores martyrum.*"—*Plowden's Remarks on Missions of Gregorio Panzani*, Liege, 1794, p. 97.

dious counsellor, conjointly with Allen, of the cabinets of Madrid and of Rome. From Rome came the denunciatory bull of 1569, renewed with an artful modification in 1580, and again in 1588; and from Spain the Armada.

It has been ascertained by his own writings, that the Jesuit Parsons, who had obtained free access to the presence of the Spanish monarch, left Madrid in 1585, about the time when the preparations for the Armada began, and returned to Madrid in 1589, the year after its destruction; so that the English Jesuit, whose sanguine views had aided the inspiration, had also the fortitude to console and to assure the Spanish monarch that "the punishment of England had only been deferred." Of this secret intercourse with the Court of Madrid we have the express avowal of the English Cardinal, Allen, in that infuriated "Admonition to the nobility and people of England," the precursor of the Armada; in which this Italianated Englishman, contrary to those habits and that language of amenity to which he had been accustomed, suddenly dropped the veil, and, at the command of his sacerdotal suzerain, raged against Elizabeth more furiously than had the the Mar-prelate Knox.

In the year 1580, PARSONS and CAMPIAN came the first Jesuit missionaries to their native soil. Camden

was acquainted with both these personages at college. The contrast of their personal dispositions might have occasioned their selection; for the chiefs of this noted order not only exercised a refined discernment in the psychology of their brothers and agents, but always acted on an ambidextrous policy. Campian, with amenity of manners and sweetness of elocution, with a taste imbued with literature, was adapted to win the affections of those whom Parsons sometimes terrified by his hardihood. They landed in England at different ports; and, though at first separated, subsequently they sometimes met. They travelled under a variety of disguises, sure of concealment in the priests' secret chamber of many a mansion, or they haunted unfrequented paths. A tradition in the Stonor family still points at a tangled dell in the park where Campian wrote his *Decem Rationes*, and had his books and his food conveyed to him.

We have an interesting account of the perilous position which he occupied; his devoted spirit, not to be subdued by despair, but tinged with the softest melancholy, is disclosed in a letter to the General of the order. He tells him that he is obliged to assume a most antick dress, which he often changes as well as his name; but his studious habits were not interrupted amid this scene of trouble: he says, "Every day I ride

about the country. Sitting on my horse, I meditate a short sermon, which coming into the house I more perfectly polish. Afterwards, if any come to me I discourse with them, to which they bring thirsty ears." But notwithstanding that most threatening edicts were dispersed against them, he says, that "by wariness and the prayers of good people, we have in safety gone over a great part of the island. I see many forgetting themselves to be careful for us." He concludes, "We cannot long escape the hands of heretics, so many are the eyes, the tongues, and treacheries of our enemies. Just now I read a letter where was written, 'Campian is taken.' This old song now so rings in mine ears wheresoever I come, that very fear hath driven all fear from me; my life is always in my hand. Let them that shall be sent hither for our supply bring this along with them, well thought on beforehand."

Our Jesuits in some respects betrayed themselves by their zeal in addressing the nation through their own publications. Parsons, under the lugubrious designation of John Howlet, that is, Owlet, sent forth his "screechings;" and Campian, too confident of his irrefutable "Decem Rationes," was so imprudent as to publish "A Challenge for a Public Disputation" in the presence of the queen. The eye of Walsingham opened on their suspected presence. A Roman Catholic

servant unwittingly betrayed Campian, who suffered as a state victim*. Parsons saw his own doom approaching, and vanished! This able Jesuit was confident that the great scheme was to be realised by means more effective than the martyrdom of young priests. His awful pen was to change public opinion, and nearly forty works attest his diligence, while he mused on other resources than the pen to overturn the kingdom.

The history of the order records that, thirty years afterwards, Father Parsons, lying on his deathbed, ordered to be brought to him the cords which had served as the instruments of torture of his martyred friend, and, having kissed them fervently, bound round his body these sad memorials of the saintly Campian†.

Two of the numerous writings ascribed to Parsons, one before the Armada and the other subsequent to it, are remarkably connected with our national history; the ability of the writer, and the boldness of the topics, have at various periods influenced public opinion and national events. The first, "*A Dialogue between a*

* As Roman Catholics usually interpolate history with miracles, so we find one here; being assured that the judge, while passing sentence on Campian, drawing off his glove, found his hand stained with blood, which he could not wash away, as he showed to several about him who can witness of it.—*Landsdowne MSS.*, 982, fo. 21.

† Hist. Soc. Jesu. Pars quinta, Tomus posterior. Auctore Jos. Juvencio, 1710.

Scholar, a Gentleman, and a Lawyer," was printed abroad in 1583 or 1584, and soon found a conveyance into England. The first edition was distinguished as "Father Parsons' Green Coat," from its green cover. It is now better known as "Leicester's Commonwealth," a title drawn from one of its sarcastic phrases.

To describe this political libel as a mere invective, would convey but an imperfect notion of its singularity. The occasion which levelled this artful and elaborate scandalous chronicle at Leicester, and at Leicester alone, remains as unknown as this circumstantial narrative descends to us unauthenticated and unrefuted. That the whole was framed by invention, is as incredible as that the favourite of Elizabeth during thirty years could possibly have kept his equal tenor throughout such a criminal career, besides not a few atrocities which were prevented by intervening accidents with which the writer seems equally conversant as with those perpetrated. The mysterious marriages of Leicester—his first lady found at the foot of the stairs with her neck broken, but "without hurting the hood on her head"—husbands dying quickly—solemnised marriages reduced to contracts—are remarkable accidents. We find strange persons in the earl's household; Salvador, the Italian chemist, a confidential counsellor, supposed to have departed from this world

with many secrets, succeeded by Dr. Julio, who risked the promotion. We are told of the lady who had lost her hair and her nails—of the exquisite salad which Leicester left on the supper-table when called away, which Sir Nicholas Throgmorton swore had ended his life—of the Cardinal Chatillon, who, after having been closeted with the queen, returning to France, never got beyond Canterbury—of the sending a casuist with a case of conscience to Walsingham, to satisfy that statesman of the moral expediency of ridding the state of the Queen of Scots by an Italian philtre—all these incidents almost induce one to imagine the existence of an English Borgia, full-length drawn by the hand of a Machiavel.

If this strange history were true, it would not be wanting in a moral; for if Leicester were himself this poisoner, there seems some reason to believe that the poisoner himself was poisoned. "The beast," as Throgmorton called this earl, found but a frail countess in the Lady Lettice, whose first husband, the Earl of Essex, had suddenly expired. The master of the horse had fired her passion—a hired bravo, in cleaving his scull, did not succeed in despatching the wounded lover: where the blow came from they did not doubt. Leicester was conducting his countess to Kenilworth; stopping at Cornbury Hall, in Oxfordshire, the lady

was possibly reminded of the tale of Cumnor Hall. To Leicester, after his usual excessive indulgence at table, the countess deemed it necessary to administer a cordial —it was his last draught! Such is the revelation of the page and latterly the gentleman of this earl. Certain it is that Leicester was suddenly seized with fever, and died on his way to Kenilworth, and that the master of the horse shortly after married the poisoning countess of the great poisoner*.

Had the writer unskilfully heaped together such atrocious acts, or such ambiguous tales, the libel had not endured; the life of this new Borgia is composed of richer materials than extravagant crimes. It furnishes a picture of eventful days and busied personages; truth and fiction brightening and shadowing each other. Some close observer in the court circle, one who sickened at the queen's insolent favourite, was a malicious correspondent. Some realities lie on the surface; and Sir Philip Sidney was baffled, or confounded, when he would have sent forth his chivalric challenge to the veiled accuser.

* This remarkable incident, in keeping with the rest, was discovered by Dr. Bliss in a manuscript note on "Leicester's Ghost," as communicated by the page to the writer from his own personal observations.—*Athenæ Oxon.*, ii. col. 74.

If this voracious Apicius did not die of a surfeit, the fever might have been caught from the cordial. The marriage of the master of the horse seems to wind up the story.

The adversaries of the Jesuits referred to Busenbaum, a favourite author with the order, to inform the world that among the artifices of the political brotherhood was inculcated the doctrine of systematic calumny. "Whenever you would ruin a person or a government, you must begin by spreading calumnies to defame them. Many will incline to believe or to side with the propagator. Repetition and perseverance will at length give the consistency of probability, and the calumnies will stick to a distant day." A nickname a man may chance to wear out; but a system of calumny, pursued by a faction, may descend even to posterity. This principle has taken full effect on this state-favourite. The libel was most diligently spread about—"La vie abominable" was read throughout Europe. This story of the "subject without subjection," who "shoots at a diadem," in England or Scotland, and turns England into a "Leicesterian commonwealth," raised princely anger: the queen condescended to have circular letters written to protest against it, considering the libel as reflecting on herself, in the choice of so principal a counsellor: and though her majesty discovered that the author was nothing less than "an incarnate devil," yet to this day the state-favourite Leicester remains the most mysterious personage in our history; nor is there any historian from

the days of Camden who dares to extenuate suspicions which come to us palpable as realities. In truth, the life of Leicester is darkness; his political intrigues probably were carried on with all parties, which probably he adopted and betrayed by turns—at last his caprice stood above law. And even in his domestic privacy there were strange incidents, dark and secret, which eye was not to see, nor ear to listen to; and we have a remarkable chance-evidence of this singular fact in that mysterious sonnet of Spenser prefixed to his version of Virgil's Gnat, whose sad tale was his own, dedicated "to the deceased lord;" his "cloudy tears" have left "this riddle rare" to some "future Œdipus" who has never arisen*.

The armada flying from our coasts evinced to Spain and Rome that Elizabeth was not to be dethroned. What then remained to hold a flattering vision of the English crown to Philip, and to cast the heretical land into confusion? The genius of this new Machiavel rose with the magnitude of the subject and the singularity of the occasion.

The policy or the weakness of Elizabeth never consented to settle the succession; and as the queen aged, all Europe became more interested in that impending

* See the subsequent article on "SPENSER."

event. This was a cause of national uneasiness, and an implement for political mischief.

In 1594 was printed at Antwerp, "A Conference about the next Succession to the Crown of England." The purpose of this memorable tract is twofold. The first part inculcates the doctrine that society is a compact made by man with man for the good of the commonwealth; that the forms of government are diverse, and therefore are by God and nature left to the choice of the people; that kings do not derive their title from any birthright, or lineal descent, but from their coronation, with conditions and admissions by the consent of the people; and that kings may be deposed, or the line of succession may be altered, as many of our own and other monarchs have suffered from various causes, being accountable for their misgovernment or natural incompetency. "Commonwealths have sometimes chastised lawfully their lawful princes, though never so lawfully descended." This has often been "commodious to the weal-public," and "it may seem that God prospered the same by the good success and successors that hence ensued*."

* "There is," continues our author, "a point much to be noted," which is, "what men have commonly succeeded in the places of such as have been deposed?" The successors of five of our deposed monarchs have been all eminent princes; "John, Edward the

This theory of monarchical government was opposed to those "absurd flatterers who yield too much power to princes," and was not likely, as we shall see, to be only a work of temporary interest. Let us, however, observe that this advocate of the people's supremacy over their sovereign's was himself the vowed slave to passive obedience, and the indefeasible and absolute rule of the sacerdotal suzerain.

The second division is a very curious historical treatise on the titles and pretensions of ten or eleven families of the English blood-royal, "what may be said for them, and what against them." From its topics it was distinguished as "The Book of Titles." It was well adapted to perplex the nation or raise up competitors, while, however, it reminded them "of the slaughter and the executions of the nobility of England." In this uncertainty of the succession, Isabella of Spain, whose ancestry is drawn from the Conquest through many descents, is shown to have the best title, and James of Scotland the worst.

The book appeared in London with a dedication to the Earl of Essex—this was a stroke of refined malice, and produced its full effect on the queen. In this

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Second, Richard the Second, Henry the Sixth, and Richard the Third, have been succeeded by the three Henries—the Third, Fourth, and Seventh; and two Edwards—Third and Fourth."

panegyric on the earl's "eminence in place and in dignity, in favour of the prince and in high liking of the people," the wily Jesuit intimated that "no man is like to have greater sway on deciding of this great affair (the succession), when time shall come for that determination, and those that shall assist you and are likest to follow your fame and fortune." The jealous alarm of Elizabeth had often been roused by the imprudence of the earl, and on this occasion it thundered with all her queenly rage; she herself showed him the dangerous eulogiums of the insidious dedicator, till the hapless earl was observed to grow pale, and withdrew from court with a mind disturbed," and was confined by illness till the queen's visit once more restored him to favour.

The immediate effect of the "Conference" appears by an act of parliament of the 35th of Elizabeth, enacting that "whoever was found to have it in his house should be guilty of high treason;" but its more permanent influence is remarkable on several national occasions. This tract contributed to hasten the fate of the hapless Charles. The doctrine of cutting off the heads of kings, "the whole body being of more authority than the only head," was too opportune for the business in hand to be neglected by the Independents. The first part, licensed by their licenser, was printed at the

charge of the Parliament, disguised as "Several Speeches delivered at a Conference concerning the Power of Parliament to proceed against their King for Misgovernment." The nine chapters of the Conference were turned into these nine pretended speeches*! These furnished the matter of the speech of Bradshaw at the condemnation of the monarch; and even Milton, in his Defence of the English People, adopted the doctrines. Never has political pamphlet directed an event more awful, and on which the destiny of a nation was suspended. Even an abstract of it served for the nonce, under the title of "The Broken Succession of the Crown of England," at the time that Cromwell was aiming at restoring the English monarchy in his own person. It was again renovated in 1681, at the time of agitating the bill of exclusion against James the Second. I believe it has appeared in other forms. Nor was the fortune of "Leicester's Commonwealth" less remarkable in serving the designs of a party. It was twice reprinted, in 1641, as a melancholy picture of a royal

* I have not seen this edition of "The Conference," or "Speeches," but it must assuredly have suffered some mutilations; for Parsons often puts down some marginal notes which were not suitable to the republicans of that day. Such, for instance, as these—"A Monarchy the best Government;" "Miseries of Popular Governments." Mabbott, the licenser, must have rescinded such unqualified axioms.

favourite, and again, probably with the same political design, in 1706.

Parsons' claim to these two memorable tracts has been impugned. My ingenious friend Dr. Bliss has referred to two letters of Dr. Ashton, Master of Jesus College, and Dean Mosse, on the subject of "Leicester's Commonwealth," which he considers "fully prove" that it was not the work of Parsons. I give these letters.

Dr. Ashton to Dean Mosse.

"There is nothing in the book that favours the Spanish invasion, and all the treason is only against Leicester. Parsons has been esteemed the author of it; but I can't yet believe that 'twas his, for several reasons.

"First; there's nothing in it of the fierce and turbulent spirit of that Jesuit; but a tender concern for the Queen and government both in church and state.

"Secondly; the book makes a papist own that several of the priests and others were traitors, and often commends Burleigh, who was the chief persecutor, and ordered the writing of "The Book of Justice, &c." which certainly Parsons would not have done, whose errand into England not long before was to renew the excommunication of the Queen, and declare her subjects freed from their allegiance, nay bound to take up arms

against her; especially since Campian, his brother-missionary, was one of those martyrs, and he himself very narrowly escaped.

"Thirdly; when Parsons and Campian came into England in '80, it was to further the designs of the King of Spain, and persuade the people that upon the Queen's forfeiture he had a right to take possession of her crown. But there's nothing looks that way in the book, unless defending the title of the Queen of the Scots and her son be writing for the invasion. There was a book written a little before this, for the Scotch succession, by Lesly, Bishop of Rosse, under the name of Morgan, even by the connivance of Queen Elizabeth, as Camden tells us; but the seminary priests and Jesuits were all upon the Spanish right by virtue of the Pope's bull of excommunication; and upon this foot Parsons afterwards wrote his "Andr. Philopater," and "Book of Titles," in the name of N. Doleman.

"Fourthly; I can't think Parsons capable of writing this book; for how could a man that from '75 to his dying day (bating a few months in the year '80) lived at Rome, be able to know all the secret transactions, both in *court* and *country*, in England, which perhaps were mysteries to all the nation except a few statesmen about the Queen?

"Lastly; I can't believe that Parsons, who was

expelled (or forced to resign his fellowship in Baliol) for his immoralities, and then pretended to be a physician, and at last went to Rome and turned Jesuit, would tell that story of Leicester's management of the university of Oxford. There are several other improbabilities.

"The book seems to be written by a man moderate in religion (whether Papist or Protestant I can't say), but a bitter enemy to Leicester; one that was intimate with all the court affairs, and, to cover himself from *the bear's* fury, contrived that this book should come as it were from abroad under the name of Parsons."

Dr. Mosse's Notes on the above Letter.

"First; He points out several facts to show that the book must have been written at the end of 1584, certainly between 1583 and 85, when in '85 Leicester went general into Holland, of which there is no mention in the book, as Drake observes.

"Secondly; The design. I see nothing in the book relating to the invasion, the design being to support the title of the Queen of Scots and her son. Dr. James was the first who in print affirmed Parsons to be the only author—which was then in many mouths, that he wrote it from materials sent him by Burleigh. But as it is not very likely that Parsons, who lived at Rome,

should be acquainted with all the transactions set down in that book, so 'tis less probable that Burleigh should pitch upon him for such a work; and I take the report to be grounded only on a passage in the book that mentions the *papers* Burleigh had against Leicester." Dr. Mosse then gives what Wood has written, and Wood's inference, that neither Pitts nor Ribadeneira giving it in the list of his writings is a sufficient argument; and the Doctor concludes—

"In short, the author is very uncertain; and, for any thing that appears in it, it may as well be a protestant's as a papist's. I should rather think it the work of some subtle courtier, who for safety got it printed abroad, and sent into England under the name of Parsons*."

Allowing these arguments to the fullest extent, they are not sufficient to disprove the authorship ascribed to Parsons. The drift and character of this English Jesuit seem not to have been sufficiently taken in by these critics. There would certainly be no difficulty in the Jesuit assuming the mask of a moderate religionist, and a loyal subject; for the advantage of the disguise, he would even venture the bold stroke of condemning the

* *Cole's MSS.*, xxx. 129. Cole adds, that Baker, in a manuscript note upon Pitts and Ribadeneira's silence, observes, "That's no argument—the book was a libel, and libels are not mentioned in catalogues by friends."

martyrs. The conclusion of Dr. Mosse, that the book might be written by either a protestant or a papist, betrays its studied ambiguity. It was usual with the Jesuits to conform to prevalent opinions to wrestle with them. Sometimes the Jesuit was the advocate for the dethronement of monarchs, and at other times, urged passive obedience to the right divine. In truth, it is always impossible to decide on the latent meaning of the Jesuitic pen. Pascal has exhausted the argument.

Dr. Ashton may be mistaken, when he asserts, that Parsons and Campian came to England in 1580, to further the designs of the King of Spain. The policy of the Roman Catholic party at that moment did not turn on the Spanish succession; during the life of the Scottish Mary, the party were all united in one design; it was at her death, in 1587, that it split into two opposite factions. At the head of one stood the Jesuit Parsons; in his rage and despair, having failed to win over the Scottish prince, he raised up the claims of the Spanish line, reckless of the ruin of his country by invasion and internal dissension: the other party, British at heart, consisting of laymen and gentlemen, would never concur in the invasion and conquest of England by a foreign prince. This curious contingency has been elucidated by our ambassador at the

court of France, Sir Henry Neville, in a letter to Cecil*. It is therefore quite evident why "the book did not look *that way*," as Dr. Ashton expresses it, and why all Parsons' subsequent writings did.

Dr. Ashton considers it impossible that Parsons, who lived abroad so much of his lifetime, should be so intimate with the secret transactions of the court and country of England. But Parsons kept up a busy communication with this country. This he has himself incidentally told us, in his "Memorial for Reformation," written in 1596; he says, "I have had occasion, *above others*, for more than twenty years, not only to know the state of matters in England, but also of many foreign nations." It is recorded, that he received three hundred letters from England on his book of Titles. He was very critical in the history of our great families, and had a taste for personal anecdote, even to the gossip of the circle. In a remarkable work, which he sent forth under the name of Andreas Philopater, a Latin reply to the queen's proclamation, he describes her ministers as *sprung from the earth.* Of Sir Nicholas Bacon, he says, that he was an under-butler at Gray's Inn; of Lord Burleigh, that his father served under the king's tailor, and that his grandfather kept an alehouse, and that for himself during Mary's reign,

* Winwood's Memorials, vol. i. p. 51.

he had always his beads in his hand. In this defamatory catalogue, the Earl of Leicester is not forgotten: the son of a duke, the grandson of an esquire, and the great-grandson of a carpenter; a more flagitious man, a more insolent tyrant, England never knew; *never had the Catholics a more bitter enemy;* books, both in the French and the English language, have exposed his debaucheries, his adulteries, his homicides, his parricides, his thefts, his rapines, his perjuries, his oppressions of the poor, his cruelties, his deceitfulness, and the injuries he did to the Catholic religion, to the public, and to private families. This is quite a supplement to Leicester's Commonwealth, condensing all its original spirit.

That Lord Burleigh should have supplied materials for this political libel, stands next to an impossibility. One passage asserts that "the Lord Treasurer hath as much in his keeping of Leycester's own hand-writing, as is sufficient to hang him, if he durst present it to her Majesty." This could only have been a random stroke of the hardy writer; for were it absolutely true, that sage would never have entrusted that secret to any man. It would have been placing his own life in jeopardy. As for the tattle of the lady who, in delivering a letter from Leicester into the hands of Lord Burleigh, "at the door of the withdrawing chamber,"

was instructed to drop it in a way that it might attract the queen's notice, and induce her majesty to read it, it surely was not necessary for Lord Burleigh to communicate this "shift" of Leicester's practices; the lady might have deposited this secret manœuvre in the ear of the faithless courtier, who unquestionably contributed his zealous quota to this Leicesterian Commonwealth.

With regard to "the Conference," the Roman Catholic historian, Dodd, and others, have inclined to doubt whether Parsons was the author; and their argument is, not an unusual one with the Jesuits,—you cannot prove it, and he has denied it. Cardinal Allen and Sir Francis Englefield may have contributed to this learned work, but Parsons held the pen. It appeared under the name of Doleman; and it is said that the harmless secular priest who bore that name fell into trouble in consequence. We may for once believe Parsons himself, that the name was chosen for its significance, as "a man of dole," grieving for the loss of his country. He has, in other writings, continued the initials, N. D., associating his feelings with these letters. On the same querulous principle, he had formerly taken that of "John Howlett," or Owlet. He fancied such significant pseudonyms, in allusion to his condition; thus he took that of "Philopater." He varied his initials, as

well as his fictitious names. He was a Proteus whenever he had his pen in his hand; Protestant and Romanist, Englishman and Spaniard.

It is now, however, too late to hesitate in fixing on the true parent of these twin-productions; twins they are, though in the intellectual state twins are not born on the same day. These productions are marked by the same strong features; their limbs are fashioned alike; and their affinity betrays itself, even in their tones. "The author could not always escape from adopting a peculiar phraseology, or identical expressions, which unavoidably associate the later with the earlier work, the same in style, in manner, and in plan. Imitation is out of the question where there is identity. One pen composed these works, as they did thirty more.

The English writings of the Jesuit PARSONS have attracted the notice of some of our philological critics. Parsons may be ranked among the earliest writers of our vernacular diction in its purity and pristine vigour, without ornament or polish. It is, we presume, Saxon English, unblemished by an exotic phrase. It is remarkable that our author, who passed the best part of his days abroad, and who had perfectly acquired the Spanish and the Italian languages, and slightly the French, yet appears to have preserved our colloquial

English from the vicissitudes of those fashionable novelties which deform the long unsettled Elizabethan prose. To the elevation of Hooker his imagination could never have ascended; but in clear conceptions and natural expressions no one was his superior. His English writings have not a sentence which to this day is either obsolete or obscure. Swift would not have disdained his idiomatic energy. Parsons was admirably adapted to be a libeller or a polemic.

HOOKER.

THE government of Elizabeth, in the settlement of an ecclesiastical establishment, had not only to pass through the convulsive transition of the "old" to the "new religion," as it was called at the time; but subsequently it was thrown into a peculiar position, equally hateful to the zealots of two antagonist parties or factions.

The Romanists, who would have disputed the queen's title to the crown, were securely circumscribed by their minority, or pressed down by the secular arm; they were silenced by penal statutes, or they vanished in a voluntary exile; and even their martyrs were only allowed to suffer as traitors. A more insidious adversary was lurking at home; itself the child of the Reformation, it had been nourished at the same breast, and had shared in the common adversity; and this youthful protestantism was lifting its arm against its elder sister.

A public event, when it becomes one of the great eras of a nation, has sometimes inspired one of those "monuments of the mind," which take a fixed station in its literature, addressed to its own, but written for all

times. And thus it happened with the party of the MAR-PRELATES; for these mean and scandalous satirists, and their abler chiefs, were the true origin of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity." The scandalous pamphlets of the MAR-PRELATES met their fate, crushed by the sharper levity of more refined wits; the more solemn volumes of their learned chiefs encountered a master genius, such as had not yet risen in the nation.

In the state of the language, and the polemical temper of these early opposite systems of church, and indeed of civil government, it was hardly to be expected that the vindication of the ruling party should be the work of an elevated genius. The vernacular style was yet imperfectly moulded, the ear was not yet touched by modulated periods, nor had the genius of our writers yet extended to the lucid arrangement of composition; moreover, none had attained to the philosophic disposition which penetrates into the foundations of the understanding, and appeals to the authority of our consciousness. On a sudden appeared this master-mind, opening the hidden springs of eloquence—the voice of one crying from the wilderness.

It had been more in the usual course of human affairs, that the whole controversy of ecclesiastical polity should have remained in the ordinary hands of the polemics; the cold mediocrity of the Puritan Cartwright

might have been answered by the cold mediocrity of the Primate Whitgift. Their quarrel had then hardly passed their own times; and "the admonition," and "the apology," and all "the replies and rejoinders," might have been equally suffered to escape the record of an historian.

But such was not the issue of this awful contest; and the mortal combatants are not suffered to expire, for a master-genius has involved them in his own immortality *.

The purity and simplicity of Izaak Walton's own mind reflected the perfect image of HOOKER; the individualising touches and the careful statements in that

* When our literary history was only partially cultivated, the readers of Hooker were often disturbed amidst the profound reasonings of "The Ecclesiastical Polity" by frequent references to volumes and pages of T. C. The editors of Hooker had thrown no light on these mysterious initials. Contemporaries are not apt to mortify themselves by recollecting that what is familiar to them may be forgotten by the succeeding age. Sir John Hawkins, a literary antiquary, drew up a memoir which explains these initials as those of Thomas Cartwright, and has correctly arranged the numerous tracts of the whole controversy. But Hawkins having consigned this accurate catalogue to "The Antiquarian Repertory," it could be little known; and Beloe, in his Anecdotes of Literature, vol. i., transcribing the entire memoir of Hawkins, *verbatim*, without the slightest acknowledgment, obtains a credit for original research. Beloe is referred to for this *authentic* information by Burnet in his "Specimens of English Prose-Writers."

vital biography seem as if Hooker himself had written his own life.

We first find our author in a small country parsonage, at Drayton-Beauchamp, near Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire; where a singular occurrence led to his elevation to the mastership of the Temple.

Two of his former pupils had returned from their travels—Sir Edwin Sandys and George Cranmer, men worthy of the names they bore; for the one became his ardent patron, and the other the zealous assistant in his great work. Longing to revisit their much-loved tutor, who did not greatly exceed them in age, they came unexpectedly; and, to their amazement, surprised their learned friend tending a flock of sheep, with a Horace in his hand. His wife had ordered him to supply the absence of the servant. When released, on returning to the house, the visitors found that they must wholly furnish their own entertainment —the lady would afford no better welcome; but even the conversation was interrupted by Hooker being called away to rock the cradle. His young friends reluctantly quit his house to seek for quieter lodgings, lamenting that his lot had not fallen on a pleasanter parsonage, and a quieter wife to comfort him after his unwearied studies. "I submit to God's will while I daily labour to possess my soul in patience and peace,"

was the reply of the philosophic man who could abstract his mind amid the sheep, the cradle, and the termagant.

The whole story of the marriage of this artless student would be ludicrous, but for the melancholy reflection that it brought waste and disturbance into the abode of the author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity."

According to the statutes of his college he had been appointed to preach a sermon at Paul's-cross: he arrived from Oxford weary and wet, with a heavy cold; faint and heartless, he was greatly agitated lest he should not be able to deliver his probationary sermon; but two days' nursing by the woman of the lodgings recovered our young preacher. She was an artful woman, who persuaded him that his constitutional delicacy required a perpetual nurse, and for this purpose offered, as he had no choice of his own, to elect for him a wife. On his next arrival she presented him with her daughter. There was a generosity in his gratitude for the nursing him for his probationary sermon, which only human beings wholly abstracted from the concerns of daily life could possibly display. He resigned the quiet of his college to be united to a female destitute alike of personal recommendations and of property. As an apology for her person, he would plead his short-sightedness; and for the other, that he

never would have married for any interested motive. Thus, the first step into life of a very wise man was a folly which was to endure with it. The wife of Hooker tyrannised over his days, and at last proved to be a traitress to his fame.

The mastership of the Temple was procured for the humble rector of Drayton-Beauchamp by the recommendation of his affectionate Edwin Sandys. But not without regret did this gentle spirit abandon the lowly rectory-house for "the noise" of the Temple-hall. Hooker required for his happiness neither elevation nor dignities, but solely a spot wherein his feeble frame might repose, and his working mind meditate; solitude to him was a heaven, notwithstanding his eternal wife Joan!

Hooker might have looked on the Temple as a vignette represents the greater picture. The Temple was a copy reduced of the kingdom, with the same passions and the same parties. What had occurred between the Archbishop Whitgift and the Puritan Cartwright, was now opened between the lecturer and the master of the Temple.

The evening lecturer at the Temple was Walter Travers—an eminent man, of insinuating manners and of an irreproachable life. He had been nursed in the presbytery of Geneva, and was the correspondent of

Beza in the French, and of Knox in the Scottish church; above all, Travers was the firm associate of Cartwright, and the consulted oracle of the English dissenters. He ruled over an active party of the younger members, and, by insensible innovations, appears to have there established the new ecclesiastical commonwealth, which at first consisted of the most trivial innovations in ceremonies and the most idle distinctions. Travers was looking confidently to the mastership, when the appointment of Hooker crossed his ambitious hopes.

With the disciples of parity, a free election, and not a royal appointment, was a first state principle. To preserve the formality, since he could not yet possess the reality, Travers suggested to the new master of the Temple that he should not make his appearance till Travers had announced his name to the body of the members, and then he would be admitted by their consent. To this point in "the new order of things," the sage Hooker returned a reasonable refusal. "If such custom were here established, I would not disturb the order; but here, where it never was, I might not of my own head take upon me to begin it." The formality required was in fact a masked principle, which cast a doubt on his right and on the authority which had granted it. "You conspire against me," exclaimed the

nonconformist, "affecting superiority over me;" and condensing all the bitterness of his mingled religion and politics, he reproached Hooker that "he had entered on his charge by virtue *only of an human creature*, and not by the *election of the people*." With TRAVERS the people were more than "human creatures;" the voice of the people was a revelation of Heaven; this sage probably having first counted his votes. These were the inconveniences of a transition to a new political system; the parties did not care to understand one another. These two good men, for such they were, now brought into collision, bore a mutual respect, connected too by blood and friendly intercourse. But in a religious temper or times, while men mix their own notions with the inscrutable decrees of Heaven, who shall escape from the torture of insolvable polemics? Abstruse points of scholastic theology opened the rival conflict. A cry of unsound doctrine was heard. "What are your grounds?" exclaimed TRAVERS. "The words of St. Paul," replied HOOKER. "But what author do you follow in expounding St. Paul?" Hooker laid a great stress on reason on all matters which allowed of the full exercise of human reason. Two opposite doctrines now came from the same pulpit! The morning and the evening did not seem the same day. The son of

Calvin thundered his shuddering dogmas; the child of Canterbury was meek and merciful. If one demolished an unsound doctrine, it was preached up again by the other. The victor was always to be vanquished, the vanquisher was always to be victor. The inner and the outer Temple appeared to be a mob of polemics.

Travers was silenced by "authority." He boldly appealed to her majesty and the privy council, where he had many friends. His petition argued every point of divinity, while he claimed the freedom of his ministry. But there stood Elizabeth's "black husband," as the virgin queen deigned in her coquetry to call the archbishop. The party of Travers circulated his petition, which was cried up as unanswerable; it was carried in "many bosoms:" Hooker was compelled to reply; and the churchmen extolled "an answer answerless:" the buds of the great work appear among these sterile leaves of controversy*.

The absence of Travers from the Temple seemed to be more influential than even his presence. He had

* Both these papers of Travers and Hooker are preserved in Hooker's Works. Many curious points are discussed by Hooker with admirable reasoning. The divinity of Hooker, who is the firm advocate of legal authority, is enlightened and tolerant; while Travers, who advocated unrestrained personal freedom, is in his divinity narrow and merciless. He sees only "the Elect," and he casts human nature into the flames of eternity.

plenteously sown the seeds of nonconformity, and the soil was rich. Hooker had foreseen the far-remote event; "Nothing can come of contention but the mutual waste of the parties contending, till a common enemy dance in the ashes of them both." It must be confessed that Hooker had a philosophical genius.

It was amid the disorders around him that the master of the Temple meditated to build up the great argument of polity, drawn from the nature of all laws, human and divine. The sour neglect and systematic opposition of the rising party of the dissenters had outwearied his musings. Clinging to the great tome which was expanding beneath his hand, the studious man entreated to be removed to some quieter place. A letter to the primate on this occasion reveals, in the sweetness of his words, his innate simplicity. He tells that when he had lost the freedom of his cell at college, yet he found some degree of it in his quiet country parsonage; but now he was weary of the noise and opposition of the place, and God and nature did not intend him for contention, but for study and quietness. He had satisfied himself in his studies, and now had begun a treatise in which he intended the satisfaction of others: he had spent many thoughtful hours, and he hoped not in vain; but he was not able to finish what he had begun, unless removed to some quiet country

parsonage, where he might see God's blessings spring out of our mother earth, and "eat his own bread in peace and privacy."

The humble wish was obtained, and the great work was prosecuted.

In 1594, four books of the "Ecclesiastical Polity" were published, and three years afterwards the fifth. These are for ever sanctioned by the last revisions of the author. The intensity of study wore out a frame which had always been infirm; and his premature death left his manuscripts roughly sketched, without the providence of a guardian.

These unconcocted manuscripts remained in the sole custody of the widow. Strange rumours were soon afloat, and transcripts from Hooker's papers got abroad, attesting that in the termination of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," the writer had absolutely sided with the non-conformists. The great work, however, was appreciated of such national importance, that it was deemed expedient to bring it to the cognisance of the privy council, and the widow was summoned to give an account of the state of these unfinished manuscripts. Consonantly with her character, which we have had occasion to observe, in the short interval of four months which had passed since the death of Hooker this widow had become a wife. She had at first refused to give

any account of the manuscripts; but now, in a conference with the archbishop, she confessed that she had allowed certain puritanic ministers "to go into Hooker's study and to look over his writings; and further, that they burned and tore many, assuring her that these were writings not fit to be seen." There never was an examination by the privy council, for the day after her confession, this late widow of Hooker was found dead in her bed. A mysterious coincidence! The suspected husband was declared innocent, so runs the tale told by honest Izaac Walton.

These manuscripts were now delivered up to the archbishop, who placed them in the hands of the learned Dr. Spenser to put into order; he was an intimate friend of Hooker, and long conversant with his arguments. However, as this scholar was deeply occupied in the translation of the Bible, he entrusted the papers to a student at Oxford, Henry Jackson, a votary of the departed genius.

On the decease of Dr. Spenser the manuscripts of Hooker were left as "a precious legacy" to Dr. King, bishop of London, in 1611. They were resigned with the most painful reluctance by the speculative and ingenious student to whom they had been so long entrusted, that he looked on them with a parental eye, having transcribed them and put many things together

according to his idea of the system of Hooker*. During the time the manuscripts reposed in the care of the bishop of London, an edition of the five books of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," with some tractates and sermons, was published in 1617†; had Dr. King thought that these manuscripts were in a state fitted for publication, he would have doubtless completed that edition. He died in 1621, and the manuscripts were claimed by Archbishop Abbot for the Lambeth library.

Again, in 1632 the five undoubted genuine books were reprinted. Laud, then archbishop of Canterbury, attracted probably by this edition, examined the papers —he was startled by some antagonist principles, and left the phantom to sleep in its darkness; whether some doctrines which broadly inculcate *jure divino* were touches from the Lambeth quarter, or whether the interpolating hand of some presbyter had insidiously turned aside the weapon, the conflicting opinions could not be those of the judicious Hooker.

But their fate and their perils had not yet termi-

* "A studious and cynical person, who never expected or desired more than his small preferment. He was a great admirer of Richard Hooker, and collected some of his small treatises."—*Athenæ Oxonienses.*

† Anthony Wood has said it contained all the eight books, (followed by General Dictionary and Biographia Britannica), and accused Gauden of pretending to publish three books for the first time in 1662.

nated; the episcopalian walls of Lambeth were no longer an asylum, when the manuscripts of Hooker were to be grasped by the searching hands and heads of Prynne and Hugh Peters, by a vote of the Commons! At this critical period the sixth and eighth books were given to the world, announced as "a work long expected, and now published according to the most authentique copies." We are told of six transcripts with which this edition was collated. It is perplexing to understand when these copies got forth, and how they were all alike deficient in the seventh book, which the setter forth of this edition declares to be irrecoverable. After the Restoration, Dr. Gauden made an edition of Hooker; in the dedication to the king he offers the work as "now augmented and I hope completed, with the three last books, so much desired and so long concealed." This remarkable expression indicates some doubt whether he possessed the perfect copies, nor does he inform us of the manner in which he had recovered the lost seventh book. The recent able editor of the works of Hooker favours its genuineness by internal evidence, notwithstanding it bears marks of hasty writing; but he irresistibly proves that the sixth book is wholly lost, that which is named the sixth being never designed as a part of the "Ecclesiastical Polity."

Both the great parties are justly entitled to suspect one another; a helping hand was prompt to twist the nose of wax to their favourite shape; and the transcripts had always omissions, and we may add, commissions. Some copies of the concluding book asserted that "Princes on earth are only accountable to Heaven," while others read "to the people." We perceive the facility of such slight emendations, and may be astonished at their consequences; but we need not question the hands which furnished the various readings. When we recollect the magnificent entrance into the work, we must smile at the inconclusive conclusion, the small issue from so vast an edifice. "Too rigorous it were that the breach of human law should be held a deadly sin. A mean there is between extremities, *if so be that we can find it out.*" Never was the *juste milieu* suggested with such hopeless diffidence. Such was not the tone, nor could be the words, of our eloquent and impressive HOOKER. From the first conception of his system, his comprehensive intellect had surveyed all its parts, and the intellectual architecture was completed before the edifice was constructed. This admirable secret in the labour of a single work, on which many years were to be consumed, our author has himself revealed to us; a secret which may be a lesson. "I have endeavoured that every former part might give

strength unto all that follow, and every latter bring some light unto all before; so that if the judgments of men do but hold themselves in suspense, as touching the first more general meditations, till in order they have perused the rest that ensue, what may seem dark at the first will afterwards be found more plain, even as the latter particular decisions will appear, I doubt not, more strong, when the other have been read before*." Here we have an allusion to a noble termination of his system.

This great work of Hooker strictly is theological, but here it is considered simply as a work of literature and philosophy. The first book lays open the foundations of law and order, to escape from "the mother of confusion which breedeth destruction. The lowest must be knit to the highest." We may read this first book as we read the reflections of Burke on the French revolution; where what is peculiar, or partial, or erroneous in the writer does not interfere with the general principles of the more profound views of human policy. And it is remarkable that during the anarchical misrule of France, when all governments seemed alike unstable, some one who had not wholly lost his senses among those raving politicians, published separately this *first book of Ecclesiastical Polity;* a timely admonition,

* Ecclesiastical Polity, book first.

however, alas! timeless! I was not surprised to find classed among "Legal Bibliography" the works of Hooker.

The fate of those controversies which in reality admit of no argument, is singularly exemplified in the history of this great work. These are the controversies where the parties apparently going the same course, and intent on the same object, but impelled by opposite principles, can never unite; like two parallel lines, they may run on together, but remain at the same distance, though they should extend themselves to infinity. Opposite propositions are assigned by each party, or from the same premises are educed opposite inferences. In the present case both parties inquired after a model for church-government; there was none! Apostolical Christianity had hardly left the old synagogue. Hooker therefore asserted that the form of church-government was merely a human institution regulated by laws; and that laws were not made for private men to dispute, but to obey. The nonconformist urged the Protestant right of private judgment and a satisfied conscience. Hooker, alarmed at this irruption of schisms, to maintain established authority, or rather supremacy, was driven to take refuge in the very argument which the Romanist used with the Protestant.

The elaborate preface of Hooker is a tract of itself; it is the secret history of nonconformity, and of the fiery Calvin. Yet was it from positions here laid down that James the Second declared that it was one of the two books which sent him back to the fold of Rome. It is not therefore surprising that when a part was eagerly translated by an English Romanist to his holiness, who had declared that "he had never met with an English book whose writer deserved the name of an author!"—so low then stood our literature in the eyes of the foreigner,—that the Pope perceived nothing anti-papal in the eloquent advocate of established authority, while he was deeply struck at the profundity of the genius of "a poor obscure English priest;" and the bishop of Rome exclaimed, "There is no learning that this man has not searched into; nothing too hard for his understanding, and his books will get reverence by age." Our James the First, who it must be allowed was no ordinary judge of polemics, on his arrival in England inquired after Hooker, and was informed that his recent death had been deeply lamented by the queen. "And I receive it with no less sorrow," observed the new English monarch, "for I have received more satisfaction in reading a leaf in Mr. Hooker than I have had in large treatises by many of the learned: many others write well, but yet in the next age they will be forgotten."

The attestations of his Holiness and our James the First, to some of my readers, may appear very suspicious. They are however prophetic; and this is an evidence that the "Ecclesiastical Polity" must contain principles more deeply important than those which might more particularly have been grateful to these regal critics. Our sage, it is true, has not escaped from a severer scrutiny, and has been taxed as "too apt to acquiesce in all ancient tenets." What was transitory, or what was partial, in this great work, may be subtracted without injury to its excellence or its value. Hooker has written what posterity reads. The spirit of a later age, progressive in ameliorating the imperfect condition of all human institutions, must often return to pause over the first book of "Ecclesiastical Polity," where the master-genius has laid the foundations and searched into the nature of all laws whatever. HOOKER is the first vernacular writer whose classical pen harmonised a numerous prose. While his earnest eloquence, freed from all scholastic pedantry, assumed a style stately in its structure, his gentle spirit sometimes flows into natural humour, lovely in the freshness of its simplicity.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

WERE I another Baillet, solely occupied in collecting the "*jugemens des sçavans*"—the decisions of the learned—the name of Sir Philip Sidney would bring forth an awful crash of criticism, rarely equalled in dissonance and confusion.

He who first ventured to pronounce a final condemnation on "THE ARCADIA" of Sir PHILIP SIDNEY as a "tedious, lamentable, pedantic, pastoral romance," was Horace Walpole;—a decision suited to the heartlessness which wounded the personal qualities of an heroic man, the pride of a proud age. Have modern critics too often caught the watchword when given out by an imposing character? The irregular Hazlitt honestly confides to us, in an agony of despair, that "Sir Philip Sidney is a writer for whom I cannot acquire a taste," tormented by a conviction that a taste should be acquired. The peculiar style of this critic is at once sparkling and vehement, antithetical and metaphysical. The volcano of his criticism heaves; the short, irruptive periods clash with quick repercussion; the lava flows over his pages, till it leaves us in the sudden darkness of an hypercriticism on "the celebrated description of the 'Arcadia.'"

Gifford, once the Coryphæus of modern criticism, whose native shrewdness admirably fitted him for a partisan, both in politics and in literature, did not deem Walpole's depreciation of Sidney "to be without a certain degree of justice; the plan is poor, the incidents trite, the style pedantic." But our prudential critic harbours himself in some security by confessing to "some nervous and elegant passages."

At our northern Athens, the native coldness has touched the leaves of "The Arcadia" like a frost in spring. The agreeable researcher into the history of fiction confesses the graceful beauty of the language, but considers the whole as "extremely tiresome." Another critic states a more alarming paroxysm of criticism, that of being "lulled to sleep over the interminable 'Arcadia.'"

What innocent lover of books does not imagine that "The Arcadia" of Sidney is a volume deserted by every reader, and only to be classed among the folio romances of the Scuderies, or the unmeaning pastorals whose scenes are placed in the golden age? But such is not the fact. "Nobody, it is said, reads 'The Arcadia;' we have known very many persons who read it, men, women, and children, and never knew one who read it without deep interest and admiration," exclaims an animated critic, probably the poet

Southey*. More recent votaries have approached the altar of this creation of romance.

It may be well to remind the reader that, although this volume, in the revolutions of times and tastes, has had the fate to be depreciated by modern critics, it has passed through fourteen editions, suffered translations in every European language, and is not yet sunk among the refuse of the bibliopolists. "The Arcadia" was long, and it may still remain, the haunt of the poetical tribe. SIDNEY was one of those writers whom Shakespeare not only studied but imitated in his scenes, copied his language, and transferred his ideas†.

* Annual Review, iv. 547.

† Who does not recognise a well-known passage in SHAKESPEARE, copied too by COLERIDGE and BYRON, in these words of SIDNEY—"More sweet than a gentle south-west wind which comes creeping over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the extreme heat of summer." Such delightful diction, which can only spring out of deep poetic emotion, may be found in the poetic prose of Sidney.

"Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour."—

Shaks. Twelfth Night, act 1. sc. i.

"And sweeter than the gentle south-west wind,
O'er willowy meads and shadow'd waters creeping,
And Ceres' golden fields."

Coleridge's First Advent of Love.

"Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
As o'er a bed of violets the sweet south."—

Don Juan, canto 2, verse 168.

SHIRLEY, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, and our early dramatists turned to "THE ARCADIA" as their text-book. Sidney enchanted two later brothers in WALLER and COWLEY; and the dispassionate Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE was so struck by "The Arcadia," that he found "the true spirit of the vein of ancient poetry in Sidney." The world of fashion in Sidney's age culled their phrases out of "The Arcadia," which served them as a complete "Academy of Compliments."

The reader who concludes that "The Arcadia" of Sidney is a pedantic pastoral, has received a very erroneous conception of the work. It was unfortunate for Sidney that he borrowed the title of "The Arcadia" from Sannazaro, which has caused his work to be classed among pastoral romances, which it nowise resembles; the pastoral part stands wholly separated from the romance itself, and is only found in an interlude of shepherds at the close of each book; dancing brawls, or reciting verses, they are not agents in the fiction. The censure of pedantry ought to have been restricted to the attempt of applying the Roman prosody to English versification, the momentary folly of the day, and to some other fancies of putting verse to the torture.

"The Arcadia" was not one of those spurious fictions invented at random, where an author has little personal concern in the narrative he forms.

When we forget the singularity of the fable, and the masquerade dresses of the actors, we pronounce them to be real personages, and that the dramatic style distinctly conveys to us incidents which, however veiled, had occurred to the poet's own observation, as we perceive that the scenes which he has painted with such precision must have been localities. The characters are minutely analysed, and so correctly preserved, that their interior emotions are painted forth in their gestures as well as revealed in their language. The author was himself the tender lover whose amorous griefs he touched with such delicacy, and the undoubted child of chivalry he drew; and in these finer passions he seems only to have multiplied himself.

The manners of the court of Elizabeth were still chivalric; and Sidney was trained in the discipline of those generous spirits whom he has nobly described as men of "high-erected thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy." Hume has censured these "affectations, conceits, and fopperies," as well became the philosopher of the Canongate; but there was a reality in this shadow of chivalry. Amadis de Gaul himself never surpassed the chivalrous achievements of the Earl of Essex; his life, indeed, would form the finest of romances, could it be written. He challenged the governor of Corunna to single combat for the honour of the nation,

and proposed to encounter Villars, governor of Rouen, on foot or on horseback. And thus run his challenge: —"I will maintain the justice of the cause of Henry the Fourth of France, against the league; and that I am a better man than thou, and that my mistress is more beautiful than thine." This was the very language and the deed of one of the Paladins. It was this spirit, fantastic as it may appear to us, which stirred Sidney, when Parsons the Jesuit, or some one who lay concealed in a dark corner of the court, sent forth anonymously the famous state-libel of "Leicester's Commonwealth." To the unknown libeller who had reflected on the origin of the Dudleys, that "the Duke of Northumberland was not born a gentleman," Sir Philip Sidney, in the loftiest tone of chivalry, designed to send a cartel of defiance. Touched to the quick in any blur in the *Stemmata Dudleiana*, which, it is said, occupied the poet Spenser when under the princely roof of Leicester, Sidney exclaims, "I am a Dudley in blood, that duke's daughter's son; my chief honour is to be a Dudley, and truly am glad to have cause to set forth the nobility of that blood; none but this fellow of invincible shamelessness could ever have called so palpable a matter in question." He closed with the intention of printing at London a challenge which he designed all Europe to witness. "Because that thou the writer

hereof doth most falsely lay want of gentry to my dead ancestors, I say that thou therein liest in thy throat, which I will be ready to justify upon thee in any place of Europe where thou wilt assign me a free place of coming, as within three months after the publishing thereof I may understand thy mind. And this which I write, I would send to thine own hands if I knew thee; but I trust it cannot be intended that he should be ignorant of this printed in London, who knows the very whisperings of the Privy-chamber*."

We, who are otherwise accustomed to anonymous libels, may be apt to conclude that there was something fantastical in sending forth a challenge through all Europe:—we, who are content with the obscure rencontre of a morning, and with the lucky chance of an exchange of shots.

The narrative of "The Arcadia" is peculiar; but if the reader's fortitude can yield up his own fancy to the feudal poet, he will find the tales diversified. Sidney had traced the vestiges of feudal warfare in Germany, in Italy, and in France; those wars of petty states where the walled city was oftener carried by stratagem than by storm, and where the chivalrous

* Sidney alludes to all that secret history of Leicester which Parsons the Jesuit pretends to disclose in his "Leicester's Commonwealth." This challenge was found among the Sidney papers, but probably was not issued.

heroes, like champions, stepped forth to challenge each other in single combat, almost as often as they were viewed as generals at the head of their armies. Our poet's battles have all the fierceness and the hurry of action, as if told by one who had stood in the midst of the battle-field; and in his "shipwreck," men fight with the waves, ere they are flung on the shore, as if the observer had sat on the summit of a cliff watching them.

He describes objects on which he loves to dwell with a peculiar richness of fancy; he had shivered his lance in the tilt, and had managed the fiery courser in his career; that noble animal was a frequent object of his favourite descriptions; he looks even on the curious and fanciful ornaments of its caparisons; and in the vivid picture of the shock between two knights we see distinctly every motion of the horse and the horseman *. But sweet is his loitering hour in the sunshine of luxuriant gardens, or as we lose ourselves in the green solitudes of the forests which most he loves. His poetic eye was pictorial; and the delineations of objects, both in art and nature, might be transferred to the canvas.

There is a feminine delicacy in whatever alludes to the female character, not merely courtly, but imbued

* See "The Arcadia," p. 267; eighth edition, 1633.

with that sensibility which St. Palaye has remarkably described as "full of refinement and fanaticism." And this may suggest an idea not improbable, that Shakespeare drew his fine conceptions of the female character from Sidney. Shakespeare solely, of all our elder dramatists, has given true beauty to woman; and Shakespeare was an attentive reader of "The Arcadia." There is something, indeed, in the language and the conduct of Musidorus and Pyrocles, two knights, which may startle the reader, and may be condemned as very unnatural and most affected. Their friendship resembles the love which is felt for the beautiful sex, if we were to decide by their impassioned conduct and the tenderness of their language. Coleridge observed that the language of these two friends in "The Arcadia" is such as we would not now use, except to women; and he has thrown out some very remarkable observations*. Warton, too, has observed, that the style of friendship between males in the reign of Elizabeth would not be tolerated in the present day; sets of sonnets, in a vein of tenderness which now could only express the most ardent affection for a mistress, were then prevalent†. They have not

* See Coleridge's Table-Talk, ii. 178.

† Richard Barnfielde's "Affectionate Shepherd" forms such a collection of sonnets which were popular. The poet bewails his unsuccessful love for a beautiful youth, yet professing the chastest

accounted for this anomaly in manners by merely discovering them in the reigns of Elizabeth and James. It is unquestionably a remains of the ancient chivalry, when men, embarking in the same perilous enterprise together, vowed their mutual aid and their personal devotion. The dangers of one knight were to be participated, and his honour to be maintained, by his brother in arms. Such exalted friendships, and such interminable affections, often broke out both in deeds and words which, to the tempered intercourse of our day, offend by their intensity. A male friend, whose life and fortune were consecrated to another male, who looks on him with adoration, and who talks of him with excessive tenderness, appears to us nothing less than a chimerical and monstrous lover! It is certain, however, that in the age of chivalry, a Damon and Pythias were no uncommon characters in that brotherhood.

It is the imperishable diction, the language of Shakespeare, before Shakespeare wrote, which diffuses its enchantment over "The Arcadia;" and it is for this that it should be studied; and the true critic of Sidney, because the critic was a true poet, offers his unquestioned testimony in Cowper——

"SIDNEY, WARBLER OF POETIC PROSE!"

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affection. Poets, like mocking-birds, repeat the notes of others, till the cant becomes idle, and the fashion of style obsolete.

Even those playful turns of words, caught from Italian models, which are usually condemned, conceal some subtility of feeling, or rise in a pregnant thought*. The intellectual character of Sidney is more serious than volatile; the habits of his mind were too elegant and thoughtful to sport with the low comic; and one of the defects of "The Arcadia" is the attempt at burlesque humour in a clownish family. Whoever is not susceptible of great delight in the freshness of the scenery, the luxuriant imagery, the graceful fancies, and the stately periods of "The Arcadia," must look to a higher source than criticism, to acquire a sense which nature and study seem to deny him.

I have dwelt on the finer qualities of "The Arcadia;" whenever the volume proves tedious, the remedy is in the reader's own hands, provided he has the judgment often to return to a treasure he ought never to lose.

It is indeed hardly to be hoped that the volatile loungers over our duodecimos of fiction can sympathise with manners, incidents, and personages, which for them are purely ideal—the truth of nature which lies under the veil must escape from their eyes; for how

* A lady who has become enamoured of the friend who is pleading for her lover, and suddenly makes the fatal avowal to that friend, thus expresses her emotion—"Grown bolder or madder, or bold with madness, I discovered my affection to him." "He left nothing unassayed to disgrace himself, to grace his friend."—P. 39.

are they to grow patient over the interminable pages of a folio, unbroken by chapters, without a single resting-place*? And I fear they will not allow for that formal complimentary style, borrowed from the Italians and the Spaniards, which is sufficiently ludicrous.

The narrative too is obstructed by verses, in which Sidney never obtained facility or grace. Nor will the defects of the author be always compensated by his beauties, for "The Arcadia" was indeed a fervent effusion, but an uncorrected work. The author declared that it was not to be submitted to severer eyes than those of his beloved sister, "being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in her presence, the rest by sheets sent as fast as they were done." The writer, too, confesses, to "a young head having many fancies begotten in it, which, if it had not been in some way delivered, would have grown a monster, and more sorry might I be that they came in, than they gat out." So truly has Sidney expressed the fever of genius, when working on itself in darkness and in doubt—absorbing reveries, tumultuous thoughts, the ceaseless inquietudes

* In the late Mr. Heber's treasures of our vernacular literature there was a copy of "The Arcadia," with manuscript notes by Gabriel Harvey. He had also divided the work into chapters, enumerating the general contents of each.—*Bib. Heberiana*, part the first. A republication of this copy—omitting the continuations of the Romance by a strange hand, and all the eclogues, and most of the verses—would form a desirable volume, not too voluminous.

of a soul which has not yet found a voice. Even on his death-bed, the author of the Arcadia desired its suppression; but the fame her noble brother could contemn was dear to his sister, who published these loose papers without involving the responsibility of the writer, affectionately calling the work, "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia;" and this volume of melodious prose, of visionary heroism, and the pensive sweetness of loves and friendships, became the delight of poets.

There is one more work of Sidney, perhaps more generally known than the Arcadia—his "Defence of Poetry." Lord Orford sarcastically apologised, in the second edition of his "Royal and Noble Authors," for his omission of any notice of this production. "I had forgotten it," he says, and he adds, "a proof that I at least did not think it sufficient foundation for so high a character as he acquired." It was a more daring offence to depreciate this work of love, than the romance which at least lay farther removed from the public eye. The "Defence of Poetry" has had, since the days of Walpole, several editions by eminent critics. Sidney, in this luminous criticism, and effusion of poetic feeling, has introduced the principal precepts of Aristotle, touched by the fire and sentiment of Longinus; and, for the first time in English literature, has exhibited the beatitude of criticism in a poet-critic.

Sir PHILIP SIDNEY assuredly was one of the most admirable of mankind, largely conspicuous in his life, and unparalleled in his death. But was this singular man exempt from the frailties of our common nature? If we rely on his biographer Zouch, we shall not discover any; if we trust to Lord Orford, we shall perceive little else. The truth is, that had Sidney lived, he might have grown up to that ideal greatness which the world adored in him; but he perished early, not without some of those errors of youth, which even in their rankness betrayed the generous soil whence they sprung. His fame was more mature than his life, which indeed was but the preparation for a splendid one. We are not surprised, that to such an accomplished knight the crown of Poland was offered, and that all England went into mourning for their hero. We discover his future greatness, if we may use the expression, in the noble termination of his early career, rather than in the race of glory which he actually ran. The life of Sidney would have been a finer subject for the panegyric of a Pliny, than for the biography of a Plutarch; his fame was sufficient for the one, while his actions were too few for the other*.

* This summary of the character of Sidney I wrote nearly thirty years ago, in the Quarterly Review.

SPENSER.

THOUGH little is circumstantially related, yet frequent outbreakings, scattered throughout the writings of Spenser, commemorate the main incidents of his existence. His emotions become dates, and no poet has more fully confided to us his "secret sorrows."

Spenser in the far north was a love-lorn youth when he composed "The Shepherd's Calendar." This rustic poem, rustic from an affectation of the Chaucerian style, though it bears the divisions of the twelve months, displays not the course of the seasons so much as the course of the poet's thoughts; the themes are plaintive or recreative, amatorial or satirical, and even theological, in dialogues between certain interlocutors. To some are prefixed Italian mottoes; for that language then stamped a classical grace on our poetry. In the eclogue of January we perceive that it was still the season of hope and favour with the amatory poet, for the motto is, *Anchora Speme* ("yet I hope"); but in the eclogue of June we discover *Gia Speme Spenta* ("already hope is extinguished"). A positive rejection by Rosalind herself had for ever mingled gall with his honey, and he ungenerously inveighs against the

more successful arts of a hated rival. Rosalind was indeed not the Cynthia of a poetic hour: deep was the poet's first love; and that obdurate mistress had called him "her Pegasus," and laughed at his sighs.

It was when the forlorn poet had thus lost himself in the labyrinth of love, and "The Shepherd's Calendar" had not yet closed, that his learned friend Harvey, or, in his poetical appellative, Hobbinol, to steal him away from the languor of a country retirement, invited him to southern vales, and with generous warmth introduced "the unknown" to Sir Philip Sidney. This important incident in the destiny of Spenser has been carefully noted by a person who conceals himself under the initials E. K., and who is usually designated as "the old commentator on 'The Shepherd's Calendar.'" This E. K. is a mysterious personage, and will remain undiscovered to this day, unless the reader shall participate in my own conviction.

"The Shepherd's Calendar" was accompanied by a commentary on every separate month; and this singularity of an elaborate commentary in the first edition of the work of a living author was still more remarkable by the intimate acquaintance of the commentator with the author himself. E. K. assures us, and indeed affords ample evidence, that "he was privy to all his (the poet's) designs." He furnishes some domestic

details which no one could have told so accurately, except he to whom they relate; and we find our commentator also critically conversant with many of the author's manuscripts which the world has never seen. Rarely has one man known so much of another. The poet and the commentator move together as parts of each other. In the despair of conjecture some ventured to surmise that the poet himself had been his own commentator. But the last editor of Spenser is indignant at a suggestion which would taint with strange egotism the modest nature of our bard. Yet E. K. was no ordinary writer; an excellent scholar he was, whose gloss has preserved much curious knowledge of ancient English terms and phrases. We may be sure that a pen so abundant and so skilfully exercised was not one to have restricted itself to this solitary lucubration of his life and studies. The commentary, moreover, is accompanied by a copious and erudite preface, *addressed to Gabriel Harvey*, and the style of these pages is too remarkable not to be recognised. At length let me lift the mask from this mysterious personage, by declaring that E. K. is Spenser's dear and generous friend Gabriel Harvey himself. I have judged by the strong peculiarity of Harvey's style; one cannot long doubt of a portrait marked by such prominent features. Pedantic but energetic, thought pressed on thought,

sparkling with imagery, mottled with learned allusions, and didactic with subtle criticism—this is our Gabriel! The prefacer describes the state of our bardling as that of "young birds that be nearly crept out of their nest, who, by little, first prove their tender wings before they make a greater flight. And yet our new poet flieth as a bird that in time shall be able to keep wing with the best."

From this detection, we may infer that the Commentary was an innocent *ruse* of the zealous friend to overcome the resolute timidity of our poet*. His youthful muse, teeming with her future progeny, was, however, morbidly sensible in the hour of parturition. Conscious of her powers, thus closes the address "To his Booke:"—

> "And when thou art past jeopardie,
> Come tell me what was said of me,
> And I will send more after thee."

After several editions, the work still remained anonymous, and the unnamed poet was long referred to by

* A strange personage has been fixed on as the commentator. Spenser lodged with a Mrs. Kerke, where his parcels were directed. E. K. has been conjectured to be Mr. Kerke, her husband!

It is a proof of the deficient skill of the modern editors of Spenser, Hughes and Aikin, that they have omitted the curious and valuable Commentary of E. K. It has been judiciously restored to the last and best edition, by Mr. Todd. The wood-cuts might also have been preserved.

critics of the day only as "the late unknown poet," or "the gentleman who wrote 'The Shepherd's Calendar.'"

In Sir Philip Sidney the youthful poet found a youthful patron. The shades of Penshurst opened to leisure and the muse. "The Shepherd's Calendar" at length concluded, "The Poet's Year" was dedicated to "Maister Philip Sidney, worthy of all titles, both of learning and chivalry." Leicester, the uncle of Sidney, was gained, and from that moment Spenser entered into a golden servitude.

The destiny of Spenser was to be thrown among courtiers, and to wear the silken trammels of noble patrons — a life of honourable dependance among eminent personages. Here a seductive path was opened, not easily scorned by the gentle mind of him whose days were to be counted by its reveries, and the main business of whose life was to be the cantos of his "Faery Queen."

Of the favours and mortifications during his career of patronage, and of his intercourse with the court, too little is known; though sufficient we shall discover to authenticate the reality of his complaints, the verity of his strictures, and all the flutterings of the sickening heart of him who moves round and round the interminable circle of "hope deferred."

Our poet was now ascending the steps of favouritism; and the business of his life was with the fair and the great. He looked up to the smiles of distinguished ladies, for to such is the greater portion of his poems dedicated. If her majesty gloried in "The Faery Queen," we are surprised to find that the most exquisite of political satires, "Mother Hubbard's Tale," should be addressed to the Lady Compton and Monteagle; that "The Tears of the Muses" were inscribed to Lady Strange; and that "The Ruins of Time" are dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke. For others, their nuptials were graced by the music of his verse, or their sorrows were soothed by its elegiac tenderness*. In the Epithalamion on his own marriage, the poet reminds

"The sacred sisters who have often times
Been to the aiding others to adorn,
Whom ye thought worthy of your graceful rymes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorn
To hear their names sung in your simple lays,
But joyed at their praise."

"The Tears of the Muses," as one of his plaintive

* These complimentary sonnets, evidently composed "for the nonce," are not the happiest specimens in our language of these minor poems, no more than they are of the real genius of Spenser. I have seen a German reprint, consisting *only* of Spenser's Sonnets, by the learned Von Hammer. Foreign critics often startle one by their fancies on English poetry.

poems is called, had possibly been spared had the poet only moved among that bevy of ladies whose names are enshrined in his volumes, around the Queen, whose royalty so frequently rises with splendour in his verse. Unawares, perhaps, the gentle bard discovered that personal attachments by cruel circumstances were converted into political connexions; that a favourite must pay the penalty of favouritism; and that in binding himself more closely to his patrons, he was wounded the more deeply by their great adversary; and in gaining Sidney, Leicester, and Essex, Spenser was doomed to feel the potent arm of the scornful and unpoetic Burleigh.

The Queen was the earliest and the latest object of our poet's musings. "The Maiden Queen" enters into almost every poem. Shortly after the publication of "The Shepherd's Calendar," wherein her majesty occupies the month of April, Spenser, in writing to Harvey, has this remarkable passage:—"Your desire to hear of my late being with her majesty must die in itself." By this ambiguous reply, it is, however, evident that Harvey, and probably Spenser himself, had looked forwards, by the intervention of his great patrons, that "the unknown poet," as he is called by "the old commentator," would have been honoured by an interview with the royal poetess. Elizabeth, among her princely infirmities, had

the ambition of verse. She was afterwards saluted as

"A peerless prince and peerless poetess,"

by Spenser, who must, however, have closed his ear at her harsher numbers*. We may regret that we know so little of our Spenser's intercourse with the Queen. If Sidney made him known to her majesty, as Philips has told, the poet might have read to the Queen the earlier cantos of his romantic epic. The poet himself has only recorded that "The Shepherd of the Ocean," Sir Walter Raleigh, brought him into the presence of Cynthia, "The Queen of the Ocean," who

"To his oaten pipe inclined her ear,
And it desired, at timely hours, to hear."

The Lord Treasurer Burleigh seems to have marred those "timely hours." Spenser had lingered before the fountain of court favour; and how often the dark shadow of the political minister intervened between the poet and the throne, we are reminded by the deep sensitiveness of the victim, the murmurs and even the scorn of the indignant bard.

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* We have several printed specimens of her majesty's poetry, which does not want for elevation of thought; but to compose poetry with the energy of her prose, deprived her majesty of all the grace and melody of verse. I have been informed, on the best authority, that Elizabeth exercised her poetical pen more voluminously than we have hitherto known, for that there exists a manuscript volume of her majesty's poems in that rich repository of state-papers—the Hatfield Collection.

Under the patronage of Leicester, the poet's services were transferred to Lord Arthur Grey, the lord-lieutenant of Ireland, who appointed Spenser his secretary. He has vindicated this viceroy's administration in the Faery Queen, by shadowing forth his severe justice in Arthegall, accompanied by his "Iron Man," whose iron flail "threshed out falsehood" in their quest of Ierne, in that "Land of Ire," where justice and the executioner were ever erratic.

Of the brief life of the poet, his better years were consumed in Ireland, where he filled several appointments more honourable than lucrative. His slender revenue seems not to have flourished under a grant of land from the crown, on the conditions attached to it in 1585*. Cast into active service, the musings of the Faery Queen were assuredly often thrown aside; its fate was still dubious, for Ireland was not a land of the muses, as he himself declared, when a chance occurrence, the visit of Rawleigh to that country, gave Spenser another Sidney. The Faery Queen once more

* Three thousand acres of dilapidated estates of the Earl of Desmond. The receivers of these grants were called "The Undertakers," as they were bound to bring the lands into cultivation, which, after the ravages of fire and sword, consisted of tenantless farms and a wasted soil. Sir Walter Rawleigh had a grant of twelve thousand acres, which he probably found profitless, for he made them over at a low rate to the Boyle family.

opened its mystical leaves on the banks of the Mulla, before a judge, whose voice was fame.

> "And when he heard the music that I made,
> He found himself full greatly pleased at it;
> He gan to cast great liking to my lore,
> And great disliking to *my luckless lot*,
> *That banish'd had myself, like wight forlore,*
> *Into that waste where I was quite forgot.*"

Spenser has here disclosed involuntarily "the secret sorrow."

The acres of Kilcolman offered no delights to "the wight forlore, forgotten in that waste." Our tender and melancholy poet was not blessed with that fortitude which, even in a barren solitude, can muse on its own glory, as Petrarch and Rousseau were wont, and which knows also to value a repose freed from spiteful rivalries and mordacious malignity. And now opened his tedious suings at court, for what, but to obtain some situation in his native home, which offered repose of mind, and carelessness of the future? We know of his restless wanderings to England, and his constant returns to Ireland. We find the poet, in 1590, wearied by solicitations, throwing out the immortal lines so painfully descriptive of

> "What hell it is in suing long to bide."

It was in this year that the three first books of the romantic Epic were published, which was followed by

the grant of a pension in February 1591. But five years afterwards, the poet still remains the same querulous court-suitor; the miserable man wasting his days and his nights; for then he tells us in his "Prothalamion," how on a summer's day, he

> "Walk'd forth to ease his pain,
> Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames.
> ——————— I whose sullen care,
> Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
> In princes' court, and expectation vain
> Of idle hopes which still do fly away,
> Like empty shadows, to afflict my brain."

When this was written, Spenser had possessed the lands of Kilcolman more than ten years, and held his pension. Were the lands profitless, and the pension still to be solicited? The poet has only perpetuated his "secret sorrows;" his pride or his delicacy has thrown a veil over them. He has sent down to posterity his disappointments, without alluding to the nature of his claims.

It was in 1597 that Spenser laid before the Queen his memorable "View of the State of Ireland." This state-memorial still makes us regret that our poet only wrote verse; there is a charm in his sweet and voluble prose, a virgin grace which we have long lost in the artificial splendour of English diction. Here is no affectation of Chaucerian words; the gold is not spotted

with rust. The vivid pictures of the poet; the curiosity of the antiquary; and above all, a new model of policy of the practical politician, combine in this inestimable tract. Spenser suggested that the popular hero of that day, his noble friend the Earl of Essex, would be more able to conciliate popular favour in Ireland. By an alternate policy, from that day to the present, has our government tried to rule that fair "Land of Ire," either by a Lord Grey's severity of justice—the Arthegal, accompanied by his "iron man," with his "iron flail;" or by the generous graciousness of an Earl of Essex, courting popularity: but neither would serve; the more quiet wisdom lay in colonisation, happily begun, and so fatally neglected. The powerful eloquence of the poet and the secretary attracted the Queen's attention. She recommended Spenser to the Irish Council, to be Sheriff of Cork; again was "the wight forlore" sent back to his undesired locality; yet now, perhaps, honours and promotion were awaiting the "miserable man." The royal letter was dated in September, and in the following month, suddenly, the Irish insurrection broke out. The flight of Spenser and his family from the Castle of Kilcolman was momentous,—perhaps they witnessed the flames annihilating their small wealth. Spenser himself lost more than wealth; for the father beheld the sacrifice of his child, and the author

was bereaved of all his manuscripts, now lost or scattered—his hopes, his pride, and his fame! He flew to England, not to live, but to experience how this last stroke of fortune went beyond the force of his own passionate descriptions, or of his nature to endure. In an obscure lodging, and within three short months, the most sensitive of men, broken-hearted, closed his eyes in mute grief, and in a premature death; Spenser perished at the zenith of human life.

Curiosity has been excited to learn the occasion of the inveterate prejudice of an insensible lord-treasurer against a tender poet, who had courted his favour. This hostility of "the mighty peer" seems not to have broken forth openly till the publication of the first three books of the Faery Queen; for all the poet's personal allusions to Burleigh were written shortly after that event.

Can so small a creature as a poet when it creeps into the sphere of a jealous statesman's policy draw on itself his hateful attention? Are crafty politicians in office like richly-laden travellers who start at a crossing shadow? Burleigh possessed the full confidence of his sovereign from her youth; but she was a woman subject to caprices, and would call her ancient friend and servant "an old fool." Burleigh was fearfully jealous of two potent rivals—the Earl of Leicester and the

Earl of Essex; these "men of arms," the patrons of Spenser, were each subsequently the head of the opposition to the pacific administration of the lord-treasurer.

"The sage old sire," moreover, well knew the romantic self-idolatry of his royal mistress; her infirmity of poetical susceptibility; her avidity of poignant flatteries on her beauty, her chastity, and even on her verse. Her majesty was now in the ascension of that glorified beatitude, the Faery Queen; and this transfiguration was the work of him whom he held to be a creature of his great rivals!

We are interested to detect the vacillating conduct of the poet to the implacable statesman. Spenser accompanied his presentation copy of the Faery Queen to the lord-treasurer with a sonnet, in which he humiliated the muse before his great court-enemy—

> "On whose mighty shoulders most doth rest
> The burden of this kingdom's government,
> Unfitly I these idle rimes present,
> The labour of lost time and wit unstay'd."

If Spenser had complained of former cold neglect, now he had to endure, what a poet can never forgive, bitter disdain.

Wounded in spirit, the poet composed, immediately

after the first appearance of the Faery Queen, "The Ruins of Time;" there, eulogising the departed Sir Francis Walsingham for his love of learning and care of "men of arms," he launches forth a thunderbolt against the wary and frigid Burleigh —

> "For he that now wields all things at his will,
> Scorns one and th' other, in his deeper skill."

And he repeats the accusation in "Mother Hubbard's Tale,"

> "Oh, grief of griefs! Oh, gall of all good hearts!
> To see that virtue should despised be
> Of him, that first was raised for vertuous parts;
> And now, broad spreading like an aged tree,
> Lets none shoot up that nigh him planted be.
> Oh, let the man by whom the Muse is scorn'd,
> Nor alive nor dead be of the Muse adorn'd."

We have, too, a more finished portrait of an evil *minister* who "lifted up his lofty towers,"

> "That they begin to threat the neighbour sky."

in which unquestionably we find some of the deformities of Burleigh's political physiognomy.

> "He no count made of nobility;
> The realm's chief strength and girlond of the crown—
> He made them dwell in darkness of disgrace,
> For none but whom he list might come in place.
> Of men of armes he had but small regard,
> But kept them low, and strained very hard;
> For men of learning little he esteem'd,
> His wisdome he above their learning deem'd.

As for the rascal commons least he cared,
For not so common was his bounty shared.
Let God, said he, if please care for the manie,
I for myself most care before else anie.
Yet none durst speak, ne none durst of him plaine,
So great he was in grace, and rich through gaine."

The gentle bard of the Faery Queen now sate down to continue his great work; but haunted by this spectral and iron-eyed monster of an unpatronising minister, he actually violates the solemnity of his theme by opening with another recollection, so fatal to his own repose.

"" The rugged forehead that, with grave foresight,
Welds kingdoms, causes, and affairs of state,
My looser rimes I wote doth sharply wite,
For praising love as I have done of late.
Such ones ill judge of love, that cannot love,
Ne in their frozen heart feel kindly flame."

But the minister could not banish him from the sovereign.

"To such therefore I do not sing at all,
But to that Sacred Saint, my sovereign Queen;
To her I sing of love that loveth best,
And best is loved"—

About the same time Spenser had written "The Tears of the Muses," where, expressing a poet's wish that the royal palaces of Eliza should be filled with

——— "Praises of divinest wits,
Who her eternize with their heavenly writs,"

I suspect that Burleigh figures again among

> ——— ——— "The salvage brood,
> Who, having been with acorns always fed,
> Can no whit cherish this celestial food;
> But, with base thoughts, are unto blindness led,
> And kept from looking on the lightsome day."

After these indignant effusions, Spenser in proceeding with the Faery Queen tergiversated in his feelings. The poet had shadowed with some tenderness the calamities of the Scottish Mary, in the gentle characters of Amoret and Florizel. Yielding to political changes, the Queen of Scots is suddenly horribly transformed into the false Duessa. For the honour of the poet we may concede that he partook of those party-passions which great statesmen know to raise up at will, and which never fail to influence contemporaries. Burleigh never paused till he laid the head of Mary on the block*. In the fifth book of the Faery Queen the poet has exhibited the trial of this state victim, and has made her sister-sovereign gracefully conceal tears which possibly were never shed; but who could expect

* I have been favoured with the sight of several manuscript letters of Burleigh, in the possession of a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Taunton, which relate to this critical period. They remarkably display the eager and remorseless decision of Burleigh. Messengers were sent off three or four times in a day, countermanding the former command, as the mind of Elizabeth vacillated, disconcerting the plans of the minister. The order "to cut off her head" is given with the most revolting minuteness.

that "the rugged forehead,"—him whom he had denounced that "alive or dead" should by "the muse be ever scorned,"—should appear with all the dignity of wisdom!

> "The sage old Sire, that had to name
> The kingdom's care, with a white silver head,
> That many high regards and reasons 'gainst her read."

The poet did worse as he advanced in his work, for in the sixth book he absolutely denies that it was his intention in any of his "former writs" to reflect on "this mighty peer." To what "former writs" Spenser alludes is not clear. The matchless picture of the fruitless days of a court-expectant in "Mother Hubbard's Tale," which many of my readers may have by heart, is supposed to have been represented to Lord Burleigh by "backbiters" as a censure on him; it was an immortal one! and the application was easy.

It was after the appearance of the Faery Queen that Elizabeth, economical as were her bounties, sealed her delight by a permanent pension. Was it on this occasion that the remonstrance of the prudential lord-treasurer diminished by half its amount? "All this for a song!" exclaimed Burleigh. "Then give him what is reason," rejoined the Queen. The words were remembered by the bard, but the royal command lay neglected at the exchequer. On a progress Spenser

reminded her majesty, by a petition, in the smallest space that ever suitor presented one, and in a style of which it was not easy to forget a word*. The lord-treasurer got reprimanded, and the poet present payment. We cannot avoid associating the anecdote with these lines—

"To have thy Prince's grace, yet want her Peer's;
To have thy asking, yet wait many years."—

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* This petition in Rhyme is well known—

"I was promised on a time,
To have reason for my rhime;
From that time unto this season,
I received nor rhime nor reason."

Mr. Todd deems the anecdote apocryphal, because he can only retrace it to Fuller, who published it seventy years after the incident recorded, assigning no authority. Honest Fuller has, however, given a tolerable authority for such a sort of thing, namely, that it was "a story commonly *told* and *believed*." There could be no motive for any one to invent the circumstance and the pleasantry, gratuitously to ascribe it to the poet. Mr. Todd is pleased to call "the numbers magical," and decides on this "ridiculous memorial" —a criticism fatal to all the playfulness of genius. Were the "Rhimes" not good enough for the nonce, and "the Reason" amusingly convenient to be remembered?

The anecdote is only deficient in its date, and possibly may relate to some former donation before the pension was fixed. Edward Phillips gives the large sum of five hundred pounds—another version of the same story; and he wrote about the same time. What remains inexplicable is, that this pension to Spenser seems to have been wholly unknown to his contemporaries—to Camden and to others —who wrote subsequently. The grant of this pension was only discovered a few years ago in the Chapel of the Rolls. The pension was only for fifty pounds; but the value of money makes the royal gift more decent than at first it would seem.

We may now close with Burleigh; but much remains to be developed in the fortunes of a court-suitor, as we trace them in the history of our Spenser. The coldness of the lord-treasurer may not have been the only cause of the poet's deep and constant laments. The sojourner in the circle of a court may be mortified not only by its repulse or its neglect, but also by the capricious favour of his patron. A devotion of service may provoke offence, whether it be from zeal too improvident, from officiousness too busy, or from an ingenuousness too open. He is thrown into a position in which he must preserve silence, and cannot always hope for pardon.

One incident of this nature deeply affected our poet in his intercourse with Lord Leicester. We only discover it by a remarkable dedicatory sonnet to his translation of Virgil's "Gnat." Had the poet not decided that the mysterious tale should reach posterity, he would not have published the sonnet several years after it was composed, for it is dedicated "to the deceased lord!" The poet has energetically described the delicacy and difficulty of the position into which he had been cast.

"*Wrong'd, yet not daring to express my pain*
To you, good lord! the causer of my care,
In cloudy tears my case *I thus complain*
Unto yourself, that only privy are.

But if that any Œdipus, unware,
Shall chance, through power of some divining spright,
To read *the secret of this riddle rare*,
And know the purport of my evil plight;
Let him rest pleased with his own insight,
Ne further seek to gloze upon the text;
But grief enough it is to grieved wight,
To feel his fault, and not be further vext.
But what so by myself may not be shown,
May by this Gnat's complaint be easily known."

The Gnat of Virgil, observing a serpent in the act of darting on a sleeping swain, stings the eye of the sleeper; starting at the pain, the disturbed man crushes the gnat, but, thus awakened, he saves himself from the crested serpent. The poem turns on the remonstrance of the ghost of the gnat, which had no other means than by inflicting its friendly sting, to warn him of his peril who had thus hastily deprived it of its own innocent existence. What was "the serpent," and why the poet was hardly used as "the gnat," and why he was

"Wrong'd, yet not daring to express his pain,"

and yet "grieved to feel *his fault*," is "a riddle rare," supposed to require some Œdipus of secret history to solve. The moral is obvious. The character of the royal favourite may give rise to many suggestions; but if I may venture a conjecture on what the parties themselves "were only privy to," Spenser had touched

on some high matter, where his affectionate zeal, however sagacious, on this occasion hurt the pride of Leicester—too haughty or too mortified to be lessoned by his familiar dependant, who, like the gnat, found that his timely warning was "his fault."

A sage of the antiquarian school imagined that he could solve the engima of Spenser's sorrows, by arranging, with dates and accounts of salaries, the official situations which the poet held. To remove the odium attached to Burleigh's prepossessions against the poet, he assumes that without the lord-treasurer's consent Spenser could not have received his lands or his pensions. But the royal grant of the forfeited lands were obviously the reward for his conduct, suggested by those under whose eye he had served: the patronage of Sidney and the Lords Leicester and Grey may be imagined to have greatly outweighed any cavils of Burleigh. George Chalmers infers that all the complaints of the poet are "too highly coloured, *if they really were complaints respecting himself!*" and concludes that all the poet's querulousness must be ascribed, not to Burleigh, but to the Irish rebellion. But the calamity of the Irish rebellion occasioned no complaints from the poet—only his death! for we have not a line by Spenser during the short interval which elapsed

between his flight from Ireland to his decease in London.

It was not by an estimate of salaries and an arrangement of dates, which yield no result, but by a statement of feelings, in which the "secret sorrows" of Spenser lie concealed, that we can decide on the real source of his continued complaints. The poet must be judged by the habits of his mind, and by those interior conflicts which are often unconnected with those external circumstances open to common observers. Of all the tuneful train Spenser was the most poetical in the gentlest attributes of the poet. That robust force which the enterprise of active life demands was not lodged in that soul of tenderness; and worldly cares, like that cancer in the breast which the sufferer hides from others, dejected the fancy which at all times was working ceaselessly among its bright creations. His vein was inexhaustible, and we have lost perhaps more than we possess of his writings. The author of "The Faery Queen" required above all things leisure and the muse. His first steppings into life were auspicious. To Sir Philip Sidney he had opened the first cantos of his romantic epic; the catastrophe of that poet-hero made our poet a mourner all his days. There was no substitute for a congenial patron: all other patrons

could be but the very statues of patronage, cold representatives of the departed, but no longer the bosom companion of the poet's thoughts, and the generous arbiter of his fortunes.

In his last days Spenser has not dropped even one "melodious tear;" but he was wept by his brothers the poets, who held his pall and bestrewed his hearse with their elegies, and beheld in the fate of their great master their own. And thus truly, though ambiguously, Phineas Fletcher described his destiny—

"Poorly, poor man! he lived; poorly, poor man! he died."

So many living details of that golden bondage into which our poet was thrown, from his earliest to his latter days, discover the real source of his "secret sorrows"—his unceasing and vain solicitation at court, the suitor of so many patrons; the *res angusta domi* perpetually pressed on the morbid imagination of the fortuneless man.

I know of no satire aimed at SPENSER; a singular fate for a great poet: even "satyric Nash" revered the character of the author of "The Faery Queen." I have often thought that among the numerous critics of SPENSER, the truest was that of his keen and witty contemporary; for this town-wit has stamped all our poet's excellences by one felicitous word—"HEAVENLY SPENSER."

THE FAERY QUEEN.

SPENSER, the courtly spectator of the tilt, the pageant, and the masque—musing over the tome of old Gothic romances, and striking into the vein of fabling of Italian poesy, whose novelty had nearly supplanted the ancient classics—was at once ARIOSTO and TASSO and OVID.

SPENSER composed with great facility; incessant production seems to have been his true existence. His was one of those minds whose labour diffuses their delight, and whose delight provokes to labour. He seems always to be in earnest, and sometimes in haste, for he had much to work. While composing the "Faery Queen," he had that concurrent poem of the regal Arthur, of no inferior *calibre*, ever in his mind. The "Faery Queen" would have contained, had it been completed, not much under a hundred thousand verses. The "Iliad" does not exceed fifteen. He seems to have been satisfied with his first unblotted thoughts. He has defects which might have proved fatal to an ordinary versifier; but his voluminous vein lies protected by his genius.

The artificial complexity of his nine-lined stanza put

him to many shifts; he exercised arbitrary power in shortening words or lengthening syllables, and hardily invented novel terminations to common words, to provide his multiplicity of rhymes; he falsified accentuation, to adapt it to his metre, and violated the orthography, to adjust the rhyme. He dilated his thoughts to fill up the measure of his stanza; and we are too often reminded of the hammering of the chain. The first book of the "Faery Queen," when the difficulties of this novel stanza must have been most arduous, is necessarily composed with most care, and, both for subject and execution, is of itself a complete poem. As Spenser acquired facility and dexterity, his pen winged its flight through the prescribed labyrinth of sweet sounds.

His exquisite ear had felt the melody of the vowelly and voluble stanza of Italy, and to which he even added a grace of his own by a new measure, in the Alexandrine close. This verse had been introduced by Sir Thomas Wyatt with no great effect; it was adroitly adopted by Spenser to give a full cadence to his stanza. Dryden, in its occasional use, professedly derived it from Spenser, and seems to have carried away the honour, when Pope in exemplifying its solemn effect ascribes it to the latter poet, who he tells us had taught—

——— "The full-resounding line,
The long majestic march and energy divine."

The inanity of that race—

"Of gentlemen who wrote with ease,"

and made such free use of "the full-resounding line," void of all thought, only betrayed their barrenness by this additional extension of their weakness. Hence it incurred the partial censure of our great poetical critic, as "a needless Alexandrine,"

"That like a wounded snake drags its slow length along."

But the soul of melody lies hidden in the musician's instrument; and the Spenserian stanza, to be felt, must find its echo in the ear of the reader. A master in the art of versification was struck by our poet's modulation, so musical was his ear in the rhythm of his verse. He remarked this in those two delicious pieces, "The Prothalamion," a spousal hymn on the double marriage of two ladies, personated as two swans in these harmonious lines—

——— "Two swans of goodly hue,
Came softly swimming down along the Lee *;—

and "The Epithalamium" on the poet's own nuptials, or, as the poet notes,—

"Song made in lieu of many ornaments,
With which my Love should duely have been deck'd."

One feature in Spenser's versification seems to have

* The Lee is the stream.

escaped notice, although Warton has expressly written a dissertation on that subject. It is Spenser's discreet use of *alliteration;* never obtrusive, but falling naturally into the verse, it may escape our perception while it is acting on our feeling. Unconsciously or by habit, his ear became the echo of his imagination; sound was the response of thought, and, as much as his epithets, scattered the "orient hues" of his fancy. Alliteration and epithets, which with mechanical versificators are a mere artifice, because only an artifice, and glare and glitter, charm by their consonance when they rise out of the emotions of the true poet*.

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* I offer some instances of alliteration; but the beauty of such lines can only be rightly judged by the context.

"In woods, in waves, in wars, she wonts to dwell
And will be found with peril and with pain."

"Such as a lamp whose life does fade away,
Or as the moon cloathed with cloudy night."

"A world of waters,
Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse cry."

"They cherelie chaunt, and rymes at random flung,
The fruitful spawn of their rank fantasies;
They feed the ears of fools with flattery."

"All the day before the sunny rays,
He used to slug or sleep, in slothful shade."

"Unpitied, unplagued, of foe or friend."

"And with sharp shrilling shriek do bootless cry."

"Did stand astonish'd at his curious skill,
With hungry ears to hear his harmony."

Some persons have been deterred from venturing on the "Faery Queen" from a notion that the style had rusted with time, and is as obsolete as chivalry itself. This popular prejudice has been fostered by an opinion of Ben Jonson, which probably referred chiefly to "The Shepherd's Calendar," where Spenser had adopted a system of Chaucerian words, which to us is more curious than fortunate, and which on the first publication required a glossary. This system he abandoned in his romantic epic; but he loved to sprinkle some remaining graces of antiquity, some *naïve* expressions, or some picturesque words; and his modern imitators, amid their elaborate pomp, have felt the secret charm, and have mottled their Spenserian stanza with these archaisms.

Of all poets SPENSER excelled in the pictorial faculty. His circumstantial descriptions are minute yet vivid. They are, indeed, exuberant, for he loved not to quit his work while he could bring the object closer to the eye. This diffusion, flowing with the melody of his verse, often raises the illusion of reverie till we seem startled by reality, and we appear to have beheld what only we have been told*. Poet of poets! SPENSER

* Spenser has suffered a criticism from Mr. Campbell, who, a great poet himself, has otherwise done ample justice to his ancient master. "It must certainly be owned that in description he exhibits nothing of the *brief strokes* and *robust power* which characterise the *very greatest poets*." Certain it is Spenser is rarely

made a poet at once of COWLEY, and once lent an elegant simplicity to THOMSON. GRAY was accustomed to open Spenser when he would frame

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;"

"brief and robust;" but contrary natures cannot operate in the same genius. If Spenser rarely shows the strength and brevity of "the very greatest poets," so may it be said that "the very greatest poets" rarely rival the charm of his diffusion; or, as Mr. Campbell himself attests, in "verse more magnificently descriptive." But the voice of Poetry is more potent than its criticism, and truly says Mr. Campbell—"We shall nowhere find more airy and expansive images of visionary things, a sweeter tone of sentiment, or a finer flush in the colour of language, than in this RUBENS OF ENGLISH POETRY."

Twining was a scholar, deeply versed in classical lore, which he has shown to great advantage in his *Version of and Commentary on Aristotle's* Treatise of Poetry. In his Dissertations "on Poetical and Musical Imitation" prefixed to this work, our critic is quite at home with Pope and Goldsmith, but he seems wholly shut out from Spenser! In a note to his first Dissertation he tells us "the following stanza of SPENSER has been much admired:"—

"The joyous birds shrouded in cheareful shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th' angelical soft trembling voices made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmurs of the waters-fall;
The waters-fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle-warbling wind low answered to all †."

Our critic observes that Dr. Warton says of these lines, that "they are of themselves a complete concert of the most delicious

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† The Faery Queen, book II. canto xii. st. 71.

and MILTON, who owned Spenser to have been his master as well as his predecessor, lingered amid his

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music." Indeed, this very stanza in Spenser has been celebrated long before Joseph Warton wrote, and often since; now listen to our learned Twining:—

"It is unwillingly that I differ from a person of so much taste. I cannot consider as music, much less as 'delicious music,' a mixture of incompatible sounds—of sounds musical with sounds unmusical. The singing of birds cannot possibly be 'attempered' to the notes of a human voice. The mixture is, and must be, disagreeable. To a person listening to a concert of voices and instruments, the interruption of singing-birds, wind, and water-falls, would be little better than the torment of Hogarth's enraged musician. Further, the description itself is, like too many of Spenser's, coldly elaborate, and indiscriminately minute. Of the expressions, some are feeble and without effect, as 'joyous birds'—some evidently improper, as 'trembling voices' and 'cheerful shades;' for there cannot be a greater fault in a voice than to be tremulous, and cheerful is surely an unhappy epithet applied to shade—some cold and laboured, and such as betray too plainly the necessities of rhyme; such is—

"'The waters-fall with difference discreet.'"

Such is the anti-poetical and technical criticism! Imagine a music-master, who had never read a line of poetry, attempting to perform the "delicious music" of our poet—or a singing-master, who had never heard a "joyous bird," tuning up some fair pupil's "trembling voice," and we might have expected this criticism from such "enraged musicians!" Would our critic insist on having a philharmonic concert, or a simple sonata? He who will not suffer birds to be "joyous," nor "the shade cheerful," which their notes make so.

"Th' angelical soft trembling voices made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet,"

the "softness trembling" with the verse; had our critic forgotten Strada's famed contest of the Nightingale with the Lyre of the poet,

musings, and with many a Spenserian image touched into perfection his own sublimity.

In associating the name of SPENSER with MILTON and GRAY, we are reminded of the distinctness of his poetic faculty, and the difference of his personal character. Spenser, tender, elegant, and fanciful, rarely participated in their condensed energies or the severity of their greatness; the personal character of our courtly poet was moulded by his position in society.

When we float along the stream of his melodious song, conscious only of its beauty, we do not often pause at elevations which raise the feeling of the sublime. Such daring visions, when they do rise on us,

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when, her "trembling voice" overcome in the rivalry, she fell on the strings to die? And what shall we think of the classical critic who has pronounced that "the descriptions of Spenser are coldly elaborate"—the most vivid and splendid of our poetry?

But the most curious part remains to be told. This fine stanza of Spenser is one of his free borrowings, being a translation of a stanza in Tasso *, excepting the introduction of "the silver-sounding instruments." The Æolian harp played on by the musical winds was a happiness reserved for Thomson. The felicitous copy of Spenser attracted Fairfax, who, when he came to the passage in Tasso, kept his eye on Spenser, and has carefully retained "the joyous birds" for the "vezzosi augelli" of the original.

It is certain that, without poetic sensibility, the most learned critic will ever find that the utmost force of his logic in these matters will not lead to reason, but to unreason. Imagination only can decide on imagination.

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* Gerusalemme Liberata, canto xvi. st. 12.

rather indicate the power of his genius than the habit of his mind. Our gentle Spenser was often satisfied with rivalling without surpassing his originals, which Milton and Gray ever did when they copied. It seems, therefore, unreasonable to assert, that Spenser has combined the daring sternness of Dante with the wild fantasy of Goethe. Yet their lofty creations have not gone beyond those of Spenser's personifications of Despair—of Fear—of Confusion—of Astonishment—of laborious Care, that workman in his smithy, living amid the unceasing strokes of his perpetual hammers—or of Jealousy, from a mortal man metamorphosed with Ovidean fancy: his single eye, for he had long worn out the other, never could be closed; no slumber could press down those restless lids; tenant of a cavern, listening day and night to the roaring billows incessantly beating his abode, threatening with its huge ruins to fall on the wretch wasting in self-torments, till, nothing left of him, he vanished into a flitting aëry sprite—

"Forgot he was a Man, and JEALOUSY is hight *."

There are two sublime descriptions of NIGHT which may be read together. In the one she is the

"Sister of heavie Death, and nurse of Woes!"

and elsewhere she appears as

"That most ancient Grandmother of all,
Older than Jove——"

* The Faery Queen, book III. canto X.

NIGHT befriending Deceit and Shame, takes one of their daughters, the witch Duessa, in her "pitchy mantle;" yoking her coal-black steeds to her iron waggon, they penetrate to the inferior regions, bearing a mortal caitiff to be *restored* to this wicked life—"the messenger of death" passing over the earth, the screeching owl, the baying dogs, the howling wolf, warn of the witch's presence; and in hell, the trembling ghosts stand

"Chattering with iron teeth, and staring wide
With stonie eyes—and flock'd on every side,
To gaze on EARTHLY WIGHT that with the NIGHT durst ride*."

The sublime fragment on "Mutability," where Nature is viewed seated mysteriously amid the creation, has not been excelled by the most philosophical poets.

"Great Nature ever young, yet full of eld,
Still moving, yet immoved from her sted;
Unseen of any, yet of all beheld,
Thus sitting on her throne——"

If such noble inventions appear rare, it perhaps is owing to the wide extent of the "faery land," as well as to the poet's proneness to luxuriance of diction. If from that voluminous inspiration the poet has sometimes trespassed on the critic's bourn, or the romantic eulogist of chastity itself has sometimes violated his

* The Faery Queen, B. III. canto iv. st. 65, and B. I. canto v. st. 20.

own virgin page, for Spenser, always imitative, caught a slight infection from his old romancers and his Italian favourites, all this exuberance bears fruit; freedom and force will ever interest the artists of poetry.

Whoever has passed into the house of Pride,

"Whose walls were high, but nothing strong nor thick,"

and marked her on her progress, "drawn by six unequal beasts," with her vile counsellors in their wicked gradation; or has entered "the ancient house of Holiness;" or counted in the den of Riches,

"The huge great iron chests, and coffers strong,"

amid the dead men's bones scattered around those chests and coffers, has realised the marvellous architecture of Fancy; or, whoever roving with the muse of Spenser through all her localities, meets the sylvan men whom the chaste Una governed, or the satyrs whom the frail Hellenore would not quit; or when that muse unveils her voluptuous charms, listens to her song in the enchanted gardens of Armida; or in the approach to Acrasia in the bower of Bliss, starts at the nymphs wantonly wrestling in the glassy waters, laughing and blushing; or more innocently gazes on the gorgeous Masque of Cupid, or the dance of the poet and mistress among the Graces,—finds all endowed with poetic existences, unchangeable in their nature amid the changes of taste so

long as imagination shall seek for its delights, and genius for the language of its emotions.

"The Faery Queen" was designed by its author to consist of twelve books; six of which we only possess, published at two several times, and a fragment of another. The subject of each book is a moral attribute; Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. Each attribute is personified by a knight-errant, with all the passions of bodily mortality.

The plan of the poem is so inartificial, that the twelve books, had it been completed, could only have formed twelve separate poems; our poet followed the free and fertile way of Ariosto. The introduction of Prince Arthur may have been designed to give a sort of unity to the incoherent twelve knights, who would have been finally led under his auspices to the court of the Faery Queen; but as the prince, however respectable in romance, comes and vanishes, does nothing, and says little, we incline to the humour of the editor, Hughes, that "the prince is here seen only in his minority, performing his exercises in Fairy-land as a *private gentleman*." The versatile plan was adapted to the genius of the poet; the ductility of his invention, the luxuriance of his imagination, and the never-ceasing flow of his mellifluous stanza, would have

suffered constraint and mutilation, bound by prescribed forms, and modelled by the classical epic. At the period that the poet Hughes published his edition* of Spenser, our editors and critics were little conversant with the Elizabethan literature, nor had the taste of the learned emancipated itself from the established form of the epic of antiquity. But Hughes was alive to the vital poetry before him, though evidently perplexed to fix on a criterion, or to specify the class of poetry, for "The Faery Queen." His excellent judgment struck into a new and right path. He describes it as "a poem of a particular kind;" and in his "Remarks on The Faery Queen," he had the merit of distinguishing poetry, like architecture, into its Gothic origin, as well as its classical. This was a discovery at that period; and subsequent critics, such as Bishop Hurd, and more recently, Schlegel, have run away with the honour, by their more ample development of the romantic school. Hughes was hardly aware of the importance of this division; for his discovery amounts to little more than one of those first thoughts, which have not ripened into a principle.

"The Faery Queen" was the last great work modelled on Chivalry. Awakening from the gloom of the theo-

* This edition of 1715, from its modernised orthography, and from greater freedoms taken with the text, is valueless.

logical contests of Edward and Mary, the court of the Maiden Queen, from state-policy and her own disposition, had been transformed into a court of romance. Glory was the cheap but inappreciable meed bestowed by the economical sovereign; and love was the language to which the female from the throne could bend to listen to her subject.

Elizabeth, stately and tender, was herself "the Faery Queen," without even the poet's flattery, when seated under the dais, amid long galleries hung with cloth of gold or silver, and all the moving tilt-yard glittering in its shine; "the noise of music," and the sound of shields; the solemn procession, and gay crowd of the many-coloured liveries; the tasselled caparisons of the horses, and the nodding plumes of the knights. There our poet fed his eyes on the pageant, enchanting by its scenical allegory,—as when four noble challengers approached—the children of DESIRE—attempting to win the Fortress of BEAUTY,—that is, Whitehall and her Majesty*! They stand in a car, "shadowed with white and carnation silk, being the colours of Desire." But the challengers must yield to Beauty, whose princely voice is their ample guerdon;

* This famous tourney may be viewed in Holinshed.—*England*, 1317, fo. The four illustrious challengers were, the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Sir Fulke Greville, and Sir Philip Sidney.

and on the following day, were the tourney and the barriers "courageously tried." Thus were the days of chivalry, in its forms or its "fopperies," restored by the Faery Queen; and with such festivals SPENSER nursed his gorgeous fancy, and the Queen was the true inspirer of his romantic Epic.

Warton and Hurd observe that Spenser copied real *manners of his time*, as much as Homer. We must here distinguish an essential difference, if Homer really represented the manners of the heroic age. It is true, that much of the *manners* and forms of chivalry prevailed among the courtiers of Elizabeth; but such *adventures* of chivalry as Spenser has described in his singular poem, were transplanted from the ancient romances. The *incidents* are therefore not of the poet's age; and we can only read his narrative as the last of the romances.

The old romance of La Morte d'Arthur was still the fashionable reading of the court; nor had the gorgeous enchantments of Stephen Hawes yet vanished, for a new edition had issued in 1555. Spenser had read Hawes; and however entranced by the pageantry of the fiction, from the uncouth stanza of "The Pastime of Pleasure" he may have been led to the construction of the Spenserian; for it is one of the aptitudes of true genius to carry to perfection what it finds imperfect.

"The Faery Queen" was produced at a crisis of transition when the old romantic way was departing, notwithstanding the temporary influence of a courtly revival, and the new had not yet arrived. The whole machinery of Gothic invention could hardly be worked; its marvels had ceased to be wondrous, and began to be ridiculed. The fantastic extravagance of the ordinary writers of fiction—that crowd of poet-apes which always rise after a great work has appeared—has been censured by the two great literary satirists of that day, MARSTON and HALL; Hall, indeed, suddenly checks his censorial temerity in blaming themes made sacred by the Faery Muse.

> "Let no rebel satire dare traduce
> Th' eternal legends of thy fairy Muse,
> Renowned SPENSER, whom no earthly wight
> Dares once to emulate——"

The compliment to Spenser does not diminish the satire levelled at the class.

Contemporary satirists furnish a precise date when ancient things are on the turn and getting out of fashion; they are the first who, like hawks, descend on their quarry.

If Spenser attempted to infuse a rejuvenescence into the dry veins of the old age of romance, by the vitality of *Allegory*, he has fallen into a great error; for his twelve knight-errants do not interest our sympathies the more for being twelve wandering virtues. *Allego-*

rical poetry not long after his day also declined; and when it was resumed by PHINEAS FLETCHER, in what he has fantastically named and described as "the Purple Island," or "the little ISLE OF MAN," the poetry can hardly preserve itself amid the ludicrous analogies which, with such ingenious perversity of taste, are struck out between anatomy and poesy, too many not very agreeable to recollect.

CHIVALRY and ALLEGORY, two columns of our poet's renown, thus soon gave way; and SPENSER has often suffered the heaviest penalty to which a great poet was ever condemned—neglect!

But these infelicitous forms, which disguised the most tender and imaginative genius, could not deprive it of its "better parts." Spenser still remained the poet among poets themselves; though for the world at large, indeed, Spenser seemed to be recognised only as a poet in the chronology of poetry. A critic of great delicacy, and a votary of "the Gothic school," despaired for the destiny of our poet. "The Faery Queen," exclaimed HURD, in the agony of his taste, "one of the noblest productions of modern poetry, is fallen into so general a neglect, that all the zeal of the commentators is esteemed officious and impertinent, and will never restore it to those honours which it has, once for all, irrecoverably lost."

This sharp lament broke out in 1760, when, only two years before, the two rival editions of CHURCH and UPTON had simultaneously appeared; and the latter could at least boast both of the novelty and the curiosity of its commentary. But literary commentators held forth few attractions to the incurious readers of that day. More than thirty years have now elapsed since the last classical edition of Spenser's works. But at no period was Spenser ever forgotten by poetical recluses; and professed imitations of our poet in modern times, though they may not always be Spenserian, have never ceased, from Shenstone to Mickle, and from Beattie to Byron.

ALLEGORY.

ALLEGORY and its exposition of what is termed the double or secret sense, is a topic on more than one account important. The mystical art of types and symbols has given rise to some extraordinary abuses, and even to artifices, which may be considered as an imposture practised on the human understanding. An extended fictitious narrative, constructed on the principle of one continued allegory, is a topic which critical learning has not expressly treated on. An allegorical epic never occurred to the ancient legislator of poetry; and modern critics have consented to define ALLEGORY as "that art in which one thing is *related*, and another *understood*."

But it has been subsequently discovered that this definition was too narrow to comprehend the multiform shapes which allegory assumes, either in the subtility or the grossness of its nature.

Licentious commentators have rioted in their presumed discoveries by extorting from the apparent meaning a hidden sense; or by typical adumbrations, wresting allusions to persons or circumstances. The genius of allegory has triumphed from an extended

metaphor to a whole poem itself; and its chimerical results have often resembled the metamorphoses of Ovid, turning every object into an altered shape, and making two objects, wholly unconnected, appear to rise out of each other. We may show from the success of many of these pretended revelations that the difficulty has not always been so great as the absurdity.

A prevalent folly has usually some parent-origin; and the present one of ALLEGORY may have been an ancient one. The learned have sought for the source of Allegory in the night of Egyptian darkness, among their hieroglyphics. That curious tale of antiquity which Herodotus has preserved, shows us all the obscurity and the inconvenience of allegorical communication in its ambidextrous nature. The four symbols—of the arrows, the bird, the mouse, and the frog, which the Scythian ambassadors silently presented to Darius on his invasion of their deserts, were an allegory; and like many allegories, this emblematical embassy admitted of contrary interpretations. This enigmatic humour of the Egyptian learning seems to have been caught by the emblematical Greeks. The priesthood, eager to save the divinity of their whole theogony from the popular traditions and poetical impieties of that bible

of the Polytheists, the Iliad, opened the secret or double sense of Homer. They maintained that the Homeric fables were nothing less than an allegory, shadowing forth the mysteries of nature, and veiling an arcanum of the sciences physical and moral. And these elucidators of speculative obscurities formed a sect under the lower Platonists*. The fathers were perfect children in their ridiculous allegories, and they allegorised the Old Testament throughout; and assuredly the Rabbins did not yield in puerility to the fathers. But all these were on topics too solemn to enter into our present inquiry.

We may, however, smile when we discover this race of Œdipuses among the *romanzatori*, or the publishers of the ancient romances. With solemn effrontery these proceeded on the principle of allegory to dignify their light and lying volumes, either to renovate the satiated curiosity of their readers, or to cover the freedom of their prurient incidents, or to tolerate their marvellous fantasies. The editor of "Amadis of Gaul" revealed a secret yet untold. The common reader hitherto had never strayed beyond the literal sense; but he was now

* We have a collection of these Allegoricæ Homericæ. Even the great Verulam caught the infectious ingenuity; and, in "the wisdom of the ancients," explains everything with the skill of a great Homeric scholiast.

informed that he had only culled the most perishable flowers; for the more elevated mind were reserved the perennial fruits of a mystical interpretation of the occult sense. It was in this way that the famous "Romaunt of the Rose," from a mere love-story and a general satire on society, was converted into a volume of theology, of politics, of ethics, and even of the *grand œuvre* of the alchemists. Such inchoate mysteries were told under "the rose!" The most ludicrous display of their literary imposture may be seen in that collection of popular tales called the *Gesta Romanorum*. Every tale is accompanied by the gloss of a pious allegorist. An "Emperor," or "Pompey the Great," is a frequent personage in these tales, and is always the type of "our Heavenly Father," or "the soul," or "the Saviour;" while *Contes à la Fontaine*, however licentious, pass through a moralisation by the puritanical cant of hypocritical monkery.

Conforming to the spurious piety of this monkish taste, a voluminous commentary expounded the morality of the ravishing versatilities of Ariosto. Berni gravely assured us that all the marvels of enchanted gardens, voluminous dragons, sylvan savages, and monsters with human faces, were only thrown out for the amusement of the ignorant; and concludes with these memorable

lines, which he freely borrowed from the father of Italian poesy,—

" Ma voi ch'avete gl'intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde,
Sotto queste coperte alte e profonde*!"

" But ye of sounder intellect admire the wisdom hidden under these coverings, high and profound!" A strain so solemn and melodious was not the least exquisite pleasantry from a burlesque satirist!

Camoens having adopted the Grecian mythology in his Christian epic, recourse was had to a mystic allegory to defend the incongruity; when Vasco de Gama and his companions sport with Thetis and her nymphs, allegorically, though in good earnest, some Portuguese commentator has explained how " these phantastic amours signify the *wild sects* of different enthusiasts in the most rational institutions, which, however contrary to each other, all agree in deriving their authority from the same source." To such ineptitudes are the allegorists sometimes driven, from the sickly taste of gratifying the infirmity of readers by cloaking their freest inventions in the garb of piety and morality. Thus

* Berni's Bojardo, canto xxxi. st. 2. He has hardly improved the verse in the Inferno, canto ix. ver. 61.—

" O voi ch'avete gl'intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde,
Sotto il velame degli versi strani."

the popular literature of Europe was overrun by these adumbrations. Even Milton echoed the occult doctrine which he had caught from the seers of the old *Romanzatori*—those Gothic Homers in whose spells he had been bound:—

> "Forests and enchantments drear,
> *Where more is meant than meets the ear.*"

While this mania of allegorising fictitious narratives was in vogue, a remarkable occurrence, had it been publicly known, might have let the initiated into a secret more "high and profound" than any of their esoteric revelations, and might have exposed the imposture which had been so long practised on their simplicity. The hapless Tasso was harassed by a most "stiff-necked" generation of "the learned Romans," as he calls the Classicists, a mob of *signori*, of mechanical critics, protesting against his potent inventions.

> "Magnanima Mensogna, hor quando è il vero
> Si bello che si posse à te preporre—."

The forest incantations of Ismen, and the enchantments of Armida, those true creations of Gothic romance, were on the point of utter perdition. In this extremity the poet decided to have recourse to the prevalent folly of fitting an allegory to his epic. He acknowledges to his confidential friend that the whole was only designed to humour the times, and begs that

he may not be laughed at. "I will act the profound, and show that I have a deep political purpose;" and he might have added a whole system of ethics, which has been extorted from the presumed allegory. "Under this shield," he proceeds, "I shall endeavour to protect the *loves* and the *enchantments*"—those golden leaves which the furious classicists would have torn out of his romantic epic. By this singular fact we are led to this important discovery, that to allegorise is no difficult affair, for the present allegory was "the work of a single morning*!"

Tasso's confession is a perpetual demonstration of *the fallacies of allegory*. We must wholly rid ourselves of "gl' intelletti sani," if we doubt that the original writers who have been so largely allegorised ever composed an extended fictitious narrative but in all the

* The "Allegoria dalla Poema" is appended to the ancient editions of Tasso's "Gerusalemme Liberata." The one before me is dated Ferrara, 1582. I believe it has been indignantly rejected by modern editors. When we detect Tasso seriously describing Godfrey as the type of the human understanding—Rinaldo, and Tancred, and others, as different faculties of the soul—and the common soldiers as the body of man—we regret that an honourable mind should degrade itself by such literary imposture. At length, having succeeded in imposing on others, he attempted to impose on himself; for he actually commenced a second "Jerusalem" on the allegorical system, and did not more happily succeed in his elder days than our Akenside in his philosophical destruction of his youthful poem.

freedom of invention, in open daylight, and never seeking to hide nature in secret coverts.

If, as we see, an allegory may be ingeniously drawn from a work which never was allegorical; so when an allegory seems designed, its secret application is usually the forlorn hope of literature, since the most subtile conjectures on these enigmas have wholly differed from each other.

Persons and incidents in an allegorical fiction are noses of wax, ever to be shaped by a more adroit finger. But in a lengthened allegory, the ground is often shifted; the allegorister tires of his allegory, and at length means what he says and nothing more. This has driven the expounders of the double sense into the absurdity of explaining an identical object, sometimes in a metaphysical and at others in a material sense; they take up what their fancy requires, and cautiously drop what would place them in an inextricable position.

DANTE opened his great work in the darkness of an allegory; but how the erratic commentators have lost their way in "Le tenebre della divina Commedia!" What are the three allegorical animals which open "the Vision?" The double sense remains inexplicable from its abundant explanations. Are these animals personifications of three great passions? Is the gay panther the type of luxurious pleasure; the lion of ambition,

the she-wolf of avarice? But what if the spotted panther should be the representative of Dante's own Florence, and its spots indicate the Neri and the Bianchi factions? The hungry lion, with its lofty head, would then be superb France, and the lean she-wolf, never satiate, be devouring Rome. Yet a later revelation from Niebuhr, according to his Platonic ideas, sees but three metaphysical beings, the types of the soul, the understanding, and the senses. Should some future allegorister discover, by his historical, political, and ethical fancies, that the three animals were designed, one for a wavering and maculated Ghibelline, and the others for the resolute papal Guelphs, the probability would be much the same. In truth we can afford but small confidence to these expounders of the double sense; for when Jean Molinet allegorised the Roman de la Rose, and illustrated it by historical appliances, as chronology was rarely consulted in his day, it appears that this good canon of Valenciennes had allegorised in reference to persons who flourished, and events which occurred posterior to the time of the writers.

In the instances which we have indicated, such as in Ariosto and Tasso, it was the commentator who had indulged his allegorical genius, not the original writers themselves. With one of our great poets unhappily the case is reversed; the poetic character and destiny of

Spenser stand connected with allegory; for here the poet himself prematurely *meditated on his allegory before he invented his fiction.* The difference is immense. SPENSER fell a victim to this phantom of the poetic creed of his day. Deeming a mystical allegory a novel spirit in poesy, he who was to run the glorious career of Faery-land first forged the brazen bonds which he could never shake off. His invention was made subordinate to a prescribed system. The poet was continually running after the allegory which he did not always care to recover in the exuberance of his imagination, and the copious facility of his stanzas. Often must he have deprived his twelve knights errant of their tangible humanity, perpetually relapsing into their metaphysical non-entities—Sir Guyon into temperance, Arthegal into justice, and Sir Caladore into courtesy!

Yet this is not the sole defect of the allegorical character of the "Faery Queen." We may suspect that when SPENSER decided on constructing an allegorical poem, he had not any settled notions of the artifice of types, nor yet of the subjects to be symbolised; of fictions which were to conceal truths, and of truths which might be mistaken for fictions. A strange confusion often prevails in his system, sometimes ambiguous, sometimes contradictory, whenever the

allegory loses itself in what is not allegorical, or the reality is as suddenly lost amid the mystical fancies.

The poet himself announced that "the Faery Queen" was "a continued allegory or dark conceit;" and he was so strongly convinced that "all allegories are doubtfully construed," that he determined to expound his own text regarding a most eminent personage; but this was merely to secure a courtly eulogy on a royal patroness. "In the Faerie Queene I mean *glory* in my *general* intention, but in my *particular* I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of the queen and her kingdom in Faery-land." He further treats that "in some places also I do otherwise shadow her." And further, the poet informs us that "her Majesty is two persons, a royal queen and a most virtuous and beautiful lady." Truly her Majesty might have viewed herself "in mirrors more than one," and, as she much liked, in different dresses. Now as the Faerie Queen, now as Belphœbe, now as Cynthia, now as Mercilla; and in the Legend of Chastity, who would deny that Britomart is the shadow of the Virgin Queen, notwithstanding that this lady-warrior bears a closer resemblance to Virgil's Camilla, to Ariosto's Bradamante, and Tasso's Clorinda? All this the poet has revealed; but had he been silent, these mystical types

might have baffled even the perilous ingenuity of Upton, his egregious expounder of the double sense, the exuberance of whose conjectural sagacity might have enlightened and charmed even Spenser himself!

The poet was himself aware, that when an allegory does not gracefully unveil itself, it admits of the most dubious expositions. The allegories of the Faery Queen which allude to public events are transparent. The first book exhibits the struggles of the Reformation with papistry. Una is Truth, the Red-cross Knight, the Christian militant, still subjected to trial and infirmity, separated from Una, or as it was called, "the true Religion," by the magical illusions of Archimagus, whom Warton considers was the arch-fiend himself, but Upton, only an adumbration of "His Holiness." The terrible giant, Orgoglio, seems to have a stronger claim to be the proud and potent Bishop of Rome, enamoured as he is of Superstition in the false Duessa, that gorgeous enchantress, so fair and foul, arrayed in purple and scarlet, whom he has seated on his seven-headed dragon, and on whose head he has placed a triple crown. The dark den of monstrous Error, the hastening cavalcade of every splendid vice, the combat with the Infidel Sans Foy, the church militant finally triumphant in the solemn union of the Red-cross with

Una, complete the allegory of "Holiness." The Apocalypse may serve as the commentary on some of these personages; but the well-known title of the lady may not be risked to "ears polite." But such is the moveable machinery of allegorical history, that Sir Walter Scott, in his review of Todd's Spenser, has discovered many other shadowings of *facts*, in the history of Christian "Holiness," who, like the Red-cross Knight, separated from Una, had to encounter "the monster Error, and her brood," in paganism, before the downfall of Orgoglio and Duessa, and popery in England; in the freedom of the Red-cross Knight from his imprisonment, our critic reveals the establishment of the protestant church*. Sir Walter might have noticed Spenser's abhorrence of the puritans.

The allegory is still more obvious, when the poet alludes to some contemporary events. It is then a masquerade by daylight, where the maskers pass on, holding their masks in their hands. In the fifth book, we see the distressed Knight Bourbon, opposed by a rabble-rout in his attempt to possess himself of the Lady *Fleur de Lis*, whom he loves for "her lordships and her lands." He bears away that half-reluctant and coy lady. But for this purpose, Bourbon had basely

* Edin. Review, vol. vii. p. 215.

changed his shield, and, reproached by Sir Arthegal or Justice, he offers but a recreant's apology:—

—— "When time shall serve,
My former shield I may resume again;
To temporise is not from truth to swerve."
"Fie on such forgerie! said Arthegal,
Under one hood to shadow faces twain."

The change of shields of Sir Bourbon is the change of faith of Henry of Navarre; and the reluctant mistress is that uncompliant France whom he forced to take him as her monarch. Not less obvious is the episode of the Lady Belgé calling for aid on the British prince—she, now widowed, and whose seventeen sons were reduced to five by the cruelties of Geryon, and the horrors of that implacable "monster, who lay hid in darkness, under the cursed Idol's altar-stone;" the great revolution of the Netherlands, the reduction of the seventeen provinces, and the horrors of a Romish persecution, are apparent.

But when the allegory runs into obscurer incidents and more fictitious personages than those which we have noticed, it becomes rarefied into volatile conjecture, or by our ingenuity may be shaped into partial resemblances, always uncertain, when we accept invented fictions as historical evidence. We know that a writer of an elaborate fictitious narrative may have touched on circumstances and characters caught from life; but

all these, in passing through the mind of the inventor, are usually so altered from their reality, to be accommodated to the higher design of the invention, that any parallel in private history, or any likeness of an individual character, any indistinct allusion, can never deserve our historical confidence. A picture of human nature would be an anomalous work, in which we could trace no resemblance to individuals, or discover no coincidences of circumstances.

A century and a half after the publication of the Faery Queen, a commentator of "the double sense" revealed to its readers that sealed history which they had never read, and which the poet had never divulged. A few traditional rumours may have floated down; but it was UPTON's edition which startled the world by the abundance of its modern revelations.

JOHN UPTON, prebendary of Rochester, and the master of a public school, which he raised to eminence, was distinguished for his scholastic acquirements, the depth of his critical erudition, and for his acquaintance with the history of the Elizabethan court, chiefly, however, drawn from Camden. Acute in his emendations of texts, they were not however slightly tinged by an over-refining pedantry, at the cost of his taste; and as his judgment was the infirmest of his faculties, in his enthusiasm for an historical illustration of Spenser,

he seems often encumbered by his knowledge striking out similitudes and parallels; a few appear not infelicitous, but many are suggested in the licentiousness of vague conjecture, or left half in the light and half in the dark. His "Critical Observations on Shakespeare" remind one of Bentley's "slashing" of Milton. Dr. Johnson has been censured for the severity of his character of UPTON; I know not whether the doctor ever attended to Upton's Commentary on Spenser; he has, however, admirably hit off a prominent feature of our critic. "Every cold"—in Upton's case I would rather say warm—"empiric, when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist."

"In one sense," says UPTON, "you are in Fairy-Land, yet in another you may be in the British dominions." And further, "where the *moral* allusion is not apparent, you must look for an *historical* allusion." Such are the fundamental positions of the allegorical theory, by which a conjectural historian designs to unveil the secret sense of a romantic epic; the poet, according to him, having frigidly descended into the historiographer of the court of Elizabeth, rather than of the court of the Faery Queen — to catch "the Cynthias of the minute," and to waste his colours on their evanescent portraits.

And amusing it is to watch the historical conjecturer of a romantic poem perilously creeping along the dark passages of secret history; but he is often at a stand. In "the palpable obscure," the historical reality, which he seems to be touching, suddenly disappears under his grasp. We have no golden key to open the occult chamber, where we are told so many knights and ladies lie entranced near two centuries in their magical sleep, and where, amid the shadowiness, the historical necromancer promptly furnishes us with their very names, recognising all these enchanted persons by their very attitudes.

One of his most felicitous conjectures, regards "the gentle squire Timias" as the poet's honoured friend, Sir Walter Rawleigh. Sir Walter once incurred the disgrace of the Queen by a criminal amour with one of the maids of honour; he was for some time banished the court; but the injury to the lady was expiated by marriage. The private history we are to look for in the Allegory. Timias offends *Belphœbe*, the patroness of Chastity, and the Queen of England, who surprised "the gentle squire" in a very suspicious attitude of tenderness with Amoret. This lady was suffering from violence, having been "rapt by greedie Lust," and the gentle squire himself had partaken of the

mischance, in encountering that savage. Timias, the knight, is seen—

> "From her fair eyes wiping the dewy wet,
> Which softly slid; and kissing them atween,
> And handling soft the hurts which she did get."

Belphœbe on the sudden appears, and indignantly exclaims—

> "'Is this the Faith?' she said, and said no more;
> But turn'd her face, and fled away for evermore."

In a romantic scene*, "the gentle squire" in banishment is wasted with grief, so as not to be recognised by his friends; his lone companion is a turtle-dove, a magical and sympathising bird, who entices Belphœbe, that Sovereign Chastity, to pursue its playful flight, till it leads her to the cell of the miserable man from whom she had so long averted her face, and Timias recovers her favour.

In this extended scene we are to view the condition of Rawleigh during his disgrace; and the opening of the canto gives some countenance to the particular application. The aptitude of a resemblance, however, may only be a coincidence. The fatal error of our conjectural historian is that of spinning at his allegory long after he is left without a thread. In Amoret's calamitous adventure, "rapt by greedie Lust," Upton

* Book III. canto viii.

sees an adumbration of the lady of Sir Walter *before* her marriage; and in another adventure, where another person, *Serena*, with "the gentle squire," are both carried to a hermit's cell, to be healed of the wounds inflicted by calumny and scandal, their condition *after* marriage. Our diviner, as further evidence of "the double sense," discovers how remarkably appropriate was the name of Serena to the lady of Rawleigh.

In all these transmigrations of persons the enigmatical expounder acknowledges that the typical incidents suddenly diverge from their prototype. The parallels run crooked, and the fictions will not square with the facts; and he desperately exclaims that "the poet has designedly perplexed the story:" but he concludes with this hardy assumption, "If the reader cannot see through these disguises, he will see nothing but *the dead letter*." And what but "the dead letter," as this hierophant of mystic senses asperses the free inventions of genius, can now interest the readers of Spenser? For the honour of our poet we protest against the dark and broken dreams hovering about a commentator's desk. Who can credit that the courteous and courtly spirit of Spenser would thus lay bare to the public eye the delicate history of the lady of Sir Walter, even by a remote allusion? Yet this he does by connecting her name with Amoret carried away by "greedie Lust," and

with Serena, who required to be healed of the wounds inflicted by scandal. Can we conceive that the poet would have thus deliberately re-opened the domestic wound, still tender, of his patron-friend, and distressed that "serene" lady, in a poem to be read by them, to be conned by malicious eyes, and to be consigned to posterity?

The readers of Upton's revelations may often be amused by his lettered ingenuity reasoning with eager perversity. In Book II. Canto i. a pathetic incident occurs in a forest, where we find a lady with her infant on her bosom, and her knight extended in death beside her. Her shriek is deadly as the blow she has given herself. Guyon the Knight of Temperance flies to her succour; dying, she tells how "her liefest lord" had been beguiled, "for he was flesh," by Acrasia, or sensual pleasure. The lady had recovered him from the fell embraces of that sorceress, who, in parting, seduces him to drink from a charmed cup her accursed *wine*. On his return homewards with his lady he would quench his thirst at a fountain, but

"So soon as Bacchus with the Nymphe does lincke,"

that is, the instant the pure water reaches his viny lips, he tastes, and he dies!

The Knight of Temperance takes the infant from the bleeding bosom of the mother to wash it in the

fountain—but no water could cleanse its bloody hand; hence it was to be called "Ruddimane:" it was "a sacred symbol in the son's flesh, to tell of the mother's innocence." Upton had discovered that the great Irish insurrectionist O'Neal, as Camden records, "dwelt in all the pollutions of unchaste embraces, and had several children by O'Donnel's wife." The badge of the O'Neals was "a bloody hand." In the ecstasy of divination he exclaims, "This lady with the bloody-handed babe is—the wife of O'Neal!" The dying lady had told her sad tale, but never had she hinted at the Irish origin. Her knight had fallen a victim to Acrasia; a suitable incident in the legend of temperance—a result of that "passion" at which the poet pointed, and described as one which

"Robs Reason of her due regality."

And this simple incident is converted into the fate of the O'Neals, presenting an image of the miseries of the Irish rebellion!

We pass by the contemporary portraits inscribed by our speculative historian with real names. When fancy is busy, likenesses are often found; a single feature is sometimes taken for a whole physiognomy. Never surely did our conjecturer shoot wider of the mark than when he discovered in the two burlesque characters of the poltroon Braggadochio and his cheating squire Trom-

part, the Duke of Anjou and his envoy Simier. These were eminent characters known in the Court of Elizabeth. To the French prince the Queen seemed partial, and once placed a ring on his finger, too sanguinely accepted as a plight of betrothment; and Simier was a discreet diplomatist, whom the Queen publicly commended for his conduct. To have degraded such distinguished men by such vulgar baseness would have been a discrepancy in the taste and decorum of our courtly poet which Spenser never betrayed*.

In regard to Spenser, after all these allusions problematical for a succeeding generation, the poet is no longer to be judged by the darkness which has hidden small and fugitive matters. We cannot know the degree which Spenser allowed himself in distant allusions to the court of Elizabeth, or, as the poet himself vaguely said, to "Fairy-land;" he may have promised

* It has been observed of Upton that, though an excellent classical scholar, he was little versed in the romances of chivalry. In the romance of *Gyron le Courtois* he would have found the original of the farcical Knight Braggodochio; a fact, long after I had written the above, which I owe to Mr. Southey. Such ludicrous caricatures are unusual with the delicacy and elegance of Spenser; and they seem never to have been struck in his mint. I suspect we should not have had such farcical personages in the Faery Queen, had not Spenser's propensity to imitation induced him to follow his beloved patron, who has not happily introduced in the Arcadia the low comic of Damœtas and his ugly daughter Mopsa.

far more than he would care to perform; for an epical poet must have found the descent into a chronicler of scandalous legends, a portrayer of so many nameless personages, incompatible with the flow and elevation of his themes. And for what was never ascertained in its own age, we dare not confide to that mystical vaticinator of passed events, a conjectural historian!

Our interpreter of allegory was honest as well as hardy; in truth, he is sometimes startled at the historical revelations which crowd on his mind. It required "the hound's fine footing," to borrow the beautiful figure of Spenser himself, for our conjecturer to course in this field of allegory. With great candour he says, "Let us take care we do not overrun our game, or start more game than we are able to catch." His occasional dilemmas are amusing. He perplexed himself by a discovery that Amoret, whom he had made the lady of Sir Walter Rawleigh, might also have served for Mary Queen of Scots. In this critical crucifixion, he cries in torture, "I will neither affirm nor deny that Amoret is the type of Mary Queen of Scots!" But he had his ecstasies; for on another occasion, having indulged a very extravagant fancy, he exclaims in joyous rapture, "This may show how far types and symbols may be carried!" Yet, with his accustomed candour, he lowers down. "If the reader should think my arguments too

flimsy, and extended beyond their due limits, and should laugh

'To see their thrids so thin as spiders frame,
And eke so short that seem'd their ends out shortly came,'

let him consider the latitude of interpretation all types and symbolical writings admit *." Truly that latitude has been too often abused on graver subjects than "The Faery Queen;" but the honesty of our mystical interpreter of double senses may plead for the extravagance of his ingenuity whenever he needs our indulgence.

Enough on this curious subject of allegory—this child of darkness among the luminous progeny of fancy. We have shown its changeable nature, and how frequently it fails in unity and clearness; we have demonstrated that "the double sense"—this system of types and symbols—has served as an imposture, since allegories have been deduced from works which were not allegorical, and forced interpretations of an ambiguous sense have led to fallacies which have fatally been introduced into history, into politics, and into theology.

* Upton's note at the close of the fifth book of "The Faery Queen."

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